APRIL'S SOWING

GERTRUDE HALL

pt Eds & O.P.

dp
60

April's

Sowing



APRIL'S SOWING

GERTRUDE HALL

Brownell, Gertrude Hall

"You'll love me yet! and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing,
June reared the bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing."

NEW YORK:
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.
1900

Copyright, 1900
By McClure, Phillips & Co.

To
My Mother

2228373

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	3
CHAPTER II	21
CHAPTER III	59
CHAPTER IV	71
CHAPTER V	82
CHAPTER VI	93
CHAPTER VII	112
CHAPTER VIII	131
CHAPTER IX	157
CHAPTER X	186
CHAPTER XI	231
CHAPTER XII	253

April's

Sowing



One

THERE was once a girl, who, in her latter-day fashion answered rather well to the description of that princess in old tales who was very pretty, and the only child of a doting potentate, and could have whatever she would, and for whose hand vast numbers of aspirants contended. Her name was Nelly Brown, and she lived in a great white pillared and porticoed country

house, with the blinds painted green, that stood in the midst of lawns and flower-beds on a little hill.

This girl one afternoon was dressing to go to a party, a garden-party. Her bower was scarcely what would have been expected from the exterior of her house, which was old-fashioned; everything in it expressed the love of prettiness in its latest kind; its expensiveness must have come near making the judicious shiver. The gem of it, set in the most favorable light, was a table like a bride, in a white lace petticoat and veil, upbearing a mirror wreathed with loves and roses, and a quantity of glimmering crystal pots and bottles, and a confusion of ivory and gold utensils. The girl sat before this on a golden chair, and let another girl in a white cap and apron take the pins out of her hair.

While this was doing, they heard a stir below the window. It was the common noise of the house-dog barking, and the house-cat spitting, and gravel flying; but, so

idle was Nelly Brown's mood, she pulled her head away from the maid, and, with the curtain held before her, looked out. After a moment she came back to her seat, and fixed upon her reflection an eye that continued engrossed with something it had seen beside Tabby and Tray.

An amiable-looking fat little woman came into the room, bonneted and gloved, all ready to start for somewhere.

"Bless the child!" she exclaimed, at sight of Nelly's arms and neck, still bare.

"Yes, Murrie Jefferson!" said Nelly, with an unashamed look over her shoulder at the exclaimer, "I have been dawdling. But I want to get there when it is half over. There is too much of it, afternoon and evening as well. We shall be kept till ever so late, anyhow, standing into the bargain. It's always so at those open-air affairs."

Her friend stood wearing behind Nelly's back an expression of discouragement comic from excess; but after a moment, like a per-

son used to the sort of thing she is encountering, she pushed another frail-looking gilt chair to the toilet, and with a face as hardily amiable as ever settled down on it, to be good company for half an hour, or an hour, or six hours.

She was about twice and a half Nelly's age, with a cheerful, mouse-like prettiness, patches of ruddy color on her cheek-bones and nose. Her dress was that of a person who knows perfectly what should be worn, and does her best to be in the fashion with remnants of fine materials lasting over from other days.

She unstopped one of Nelly's bottles, and giving her nostrils turns at smelling, ran on like a leisurely brook which purls about this and that thing that have no relation with one another.

"What is it? Violet? This? I didn't recognize it. It's so much better. Ah, French! I thought so. It makes all the difference.—Did you know there was to be

music in the grounds? What lovely grounds she has! A string orchestra, all the way from town. It must be just about beginning. —I never saw anything so pretty as the gold monograms on that ivory! What has become of your old silver set?—Oh, you little bunch of extravagance! You collect toilet-sets as we poor things might postage-stamps. Leave me the silver one in your will, won't you?—I'm afraid she will be disappointed at your coming so late, dear. You are one of the special features of this show of hers, you know. And she wanted so particularly to have you and her nephew meet.—Horace Cox, yes. The one who has the fast yacht. One doesn't have to be very deep to guess what she has in mind, the scheming old somebody.—No, you're right; one couldn't exactly call her schemer for anything she has done in this matter so far, but, bless your heart, I've known her ever since I can remember. She's a match-maker dyed in the wool. It comes of having nothing else to do,

my dear. She doesn't care for cats and parrots. Well, he's a tremendous swell. It seems a sort of pity you should miss meeting him.—Oh, he may still be there, of course, when we arrive, if we get there at any time before the end. As he is staying at her house, he probably will. Promise now to be nice to him, won't you? if only to dash the hopes of that miserable young Dempster, who is sure to be hanging about.—Oh, nothing! But he's not half good enough for you. What are you going to wear, dear? White? You mean the same as last Friday.—New? Another new one? When did it come? Where? On the bed?"

She half ran, half flew, like a chased hen, to the alcove, and on the highest note her voice afforded, cried, "Nelly! Nelly! What a love! Now you bundle yourself into that heavenly thing, Miss, and come along with me to the party before that young yachtsman has been passed round till there's none left. You shall hurry this once, you slow-

est little coach that ever crept. There! I hear the carriage driving round to the door this minute."

"Murrie," said Nelly, serenely leaning back in her chair—she was killing time now with the little pots and polisher—"you take the landau, and go your way to Miss Cox's, and bid her continue to hope she will see me. And by and by, when you have forgotten this conversation, and are half dead with your feet, and sick of circus drinks, you will see me dawn upon you in the victoria—Sam can drive me—all fresh and uncrumpled and in a sweet temper, just in time to seem a godsend to the poor New York nephew. Do go ahead for me, there's a good Murrie. Why don't you, on your way, stop for the Ranneys, so as to have company? I don't believe they will have started, and they might be glad of a seat in the carriage. Here, put on this pearl thing, it looks so nice in the black lace."

When—after a little wondering aloud had

she not really better, for Miss Cox's sake, as well as the Ranneys', do as Nelly suggested—the good Murrie had gone, Nelly put more life into the exercise of arraying herself.

It was not much later when she rustled down the stairs. Pulling on a long pale glove she wandered about the ground floor, looking for her father and mother.

She found them in the homely room she had let them keep just as they wanted it.

The gray-headed millionaire, in snowy shirt-sleeves, sat in an armchair beside the cold stove. He dozed; his face in sleep looked simple and benevolent; his skin was brown as any gardener's. The afternoon sun flung the shape of a window in rosy gold aslant the table, on which he had laid down his great shears and a bundle of newly-cut roses.

His wife sat on the other side of the stove, and knit busily at the smallest size of baby-socks. No little child of her ken but found the world it entered a place of soft white

socks edged with tender pink. Her face also was an engaging white and pink; one felt sure she must take innocent pride in her good color.

Nelly had stopped in the doorway. Her mother ceased knitting to look at her.

"Well!" she whispered across the room, "If you don't look pretty as a picture!"

Her father opened his eyes, and smiled to her, nodding. "Land! If that isn't a pretty dress you've got on!"

She came in then, and settled herself delicately, like a stupendous white butterfly, on the arm of his chair, still working at her glove.

"It came from Paris!" she said.

Two pairs of eyes looked her proudly and affectionately over. These modest mates wondered a little still at this being a very child of theirs. The father, indeed, commonly spoke to her as if with a consciousness of humor in their relation. His kind eyes finding hers sometimes flashed out the ex-

pression of a wink, as if there had been between them some pleasant understanding of a joke. The mother could not altogether conceal the touching fact that she kept up the pretense of wielding a mother's authority merely because it is happier for a child to have the sense of a mother's venerated authority over it. God knew she felt humble enough at heart toward this young meeting-ground of every grace she had been privileged to bring into the world. In every other matter this good Mr. Brown and his wife showed excellent sense.

"And where are you going, Dolly?" her father asked. "I guess Mrs. Jefferson mentioned it on her way out, but I'm forgetful of it."

"Miss Cox's, Pa. You're invited too, of course, you know. You're always invited everywhere I am. Of course."

"Me? Well, I thank them kindly. I never was cut out for parties, Dolly. I never was so scared in all my born days as

the time your mother made me go to that—what was it, Mother?—and be something with a tag in my buttonhole, and take strange ladies one after another to shake hands with the governor's wife and party. And Mother's a home body too."

"Oh, I like to *go* a sight better than your father does. But it has to be among folks I know. I get plenty of society just here in Cloverfield, and no one can say we don't do our share of entertaining. I like all Posy's friends, so long as she's around, but I don't more than half like to be left alone with them, at least not all of them. Then I seem to find our notions don't fit, or else I don't quite get the lay of theirs. I like that Mrs. Taylor you're going to visit next winter in New York, Posy. She appears like a good motherly body. And her girls appear like good girls. She's got a grown boy too, hasn't she?"

"Yes, Ma."

"Well, you won't want for a beau."

"When did Dolly ever want for a beau?"

chuckled her father, leaning forward in his chair to get more than a side-view of his girl's face. "There's Mrs. Jefferson gone along now to engage one ahead for her at Miss Cox's. She as good as said she was."

"Posy shall have just who she wants," said her mother, not far from serious, in a little definitive way she often assumed. "Posy will choose right, I've no fear. Posy's got good judgment. And with all the chances she's had to see the world and weigh one thing against the other, she ought to be bright. She shall have a real good time as long as she's a girl, and then she'll settle down and be a good wife to somebody. But I can't help hoping it'll be a long time first."

"Oh, it will!" said Nelly, with an airy tilt backwards of her head; and she raised her eyebrows as far as they would go, casting a sidelong glance at the floor. She had finished buttoning her gloves; she laid her hands on her knee, and sat swinging one white-shod foot.

"If you behave as pretty as you look, Dolly," said her father, putting up a fond hand to tuck behind her ear a little curl she had trained to stray over it, "I'm not afraid there'll ever be a better behaved girl in this State."

"You are dazzled by my dress this afternoon, aren't you, Pa? It's a good thing, for you will have to pay such a lot for it! You could get a cow and several pigs, Pa, I do believe, for what you will have to pay for this chaste simplicity."

"Why, it's nothing more than fine cambric, is it?"

"That's literally all. And a little bit of lace."

"Well, then—not but I'm willing—what in glory——"

"There! Don't you try to explain, Posy. Your father can't understand these matters. I've been trying to make him ever since I left off wearing calico prints I made up myself, and we stand just where we did at the start."

"He's a dear!" said Nelly, putting an arm round his neck and pressing his tanned cheek to her side.

"Just let me have the bill, Dolly. You know your pa, don't you?—Here, don't you want a bokay to pin in your bosom?"

"Oh, no, dear!" she said, hurriedly; "there is no place for it. See? It would crush it badly. No one wears such a thing any more."

"Well, I'll give you a big bunch to carry in your hand. They're real pretty. They're the handsomest roses I've raised this year. I've christened them 'White Ladies.' Wait, I'm going to trim off the stems for you."

He took out his pocket-knife and was removing every thorn.

"Flowers are never out of place," said the mother gently to Nelly, in deprecation perhaps of the uneagerness in her face. "It doesn't matter what the fashion is, the Lord makes flowers a sight prettier than any other

ornament. There, those'll do, David, or they'll be cumbersome for her."

"Wait a minute; I'll put a piece of newspaper round the stems, so you needn't be afraid of hurting your gloves."

"No, no, Pa, dear; it doesn't matter. Ah, well. Thank you, dear, ever so much. They are pretty. 'White Ladies,' that's exactly the name for them. Did you invent them, Pa? What fun to invent a rose! How sweet they are!"

"Now, to me those roses smell just like the common sod after a good downpour. They don't smell sweet a bit," said Mrs. Brown.

"Well, I should like to know what smells sweeter than nice damp earth," said her husband. "Haven't you ever noticed, after a shower, every one coming out on his doorstep to sniff the air? They're a sight of care, though, Dolly. I get just as tired sometimes over them as if I'd been out mowing."

"Why don't you let some one else do the hard part of the work, Pa, and you be satisfied with seeing your name in the flower-show catalogues?"

"I like it, bless your heart! I've got to be of some use. There come the girls, the three of them, up the walk. Going now, Dolly?"

"Yes, Pa. The horses have been standing ever so long. If I stop to see the girls I shall be terribly late. I am late already."

"Mrs. Jefferson seemed to think you were late an hour ago. Be you always late to everything, Posy? Is that the style too? Well, have a good time, ladybird, and remember everything to tell us when you get home. I wonder if the girls want anything in particular, or are they just coming for sociability's sake? Christie looks to me as if she'd something on her mind."

The girls, who presently entered, were three middle-aged relatives, cousins in some distant degree. Mrs. Brown became another

person at their approach. She leaned further back with her knitting; she placed her feet on a stool, and was a pretty, gray-haired, beneficent autocrat on her throne, ready to dispense counsel and charity and criticism to her little domain of Cloverfield.

The plain-featured maidens, worn-looking still from a youth of hardships, took seats about her, like humble officers of the court. Mr. Brown leaned forward to listen, ready with a not unkindly teasing laugh he had for these occasions.

"Mrs. Jones is very poorly, Aunt Hannah," said Christie; "those drops you sent her don't seem to have done her a mite of good."

"Did she take them hot?" asked Mrs. Brown, with a queenly knitting of her brows.

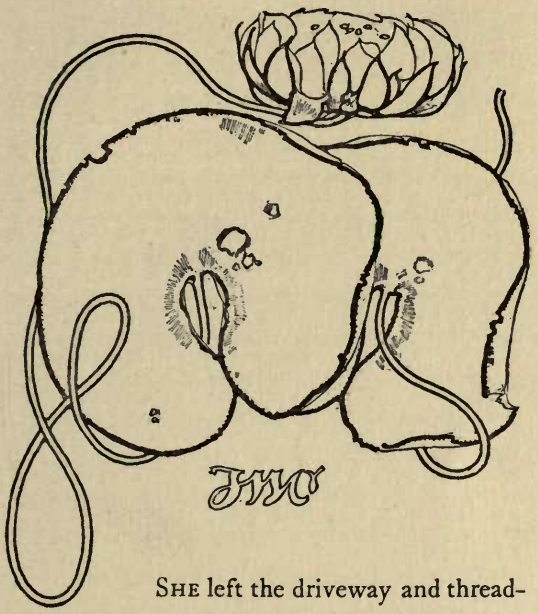
"I don't know. But the distress, she says, is just as bad as ever."

"Then you mark my word, she didn't take them hot. Isn't it strange you can't depend on that sort of woman to do as you tell her? How's the baby?"

Nelly stood aloof, working at her glove as if it were not already well on. She always felt an outsider at these scenes, supplanted, but not in a way she deplored. Mother would not have wanted her to be as Christie and Abigail and Merinda were, or to do their offices for her. The light, bright existence she led—she knew it—was her parents' one valued luxury. She kissed them good-bye as if parting from them for a long time, as she always did, and put down her sweet-smelling face for a half-second to each of the cousins, in whom she never even pretended the slightest interest, but yet whom she loved a little for their appreciation of her mother.

Coming out of doors, she looked toward the carriage in waiting under a side porch. At her appearance there was a jingling of bits.

"Wait!" she called, and walked off in the opposite direction.



She left the driveway and threaded a city of glass-houses, at this season half open, half empty. When in her progress she had left the gravel and come to a little stretch of bare earth, she looked at her shoes, white as two white doves. She made a sudden gesture of not caring, and hurried on. She took the unpicturesque paper from the rose-stems and let it drop. For a second

one might have thought she would treat the roses in a like manner. But she did not.

The broad path ended at a wicket. The glance she dropped on her shoes was a little rueful. She looked ahead; the footpath led down a slope clothed in rough grass and gray moss.

She continued lightly along the mossy edge of the path, till stopped by a three-barred fence. This was certainly awkward. She pictured to herself, not without spite, the freedom with which the last person probably passing this way had taken the fence at a single stride.

She turned to go back.

Then she turned again, laid down her roses, looked in every direction, placed her foot on the lowest bar, and alone in the sight of heaven came over the fence almost as easily as a young man.

She brushed down her ruffled feathers, and forsaking the poor white ladies in the grass, went on.

The path still descended. Now through the trees she could see water. When the path became level the character of the ground changed.

She stopped; the space still to traverse was soggy and black. A few gray planks had been used at some time to bridge the bad walking; but they were not laid in a line now, they were too far apart to make effectual stepping-places.

Nelly felt distinctly cross. It seemed as if she had really cared about the stupid adventure.

While she contemplated the forbidding soil she weighed in her mind as in a balance two visions: one, of herself at Miss Cox's, in clean shoes, surrounded, flattered, flirting; the other, of herself in the same surroundings, flattered, flirting—only, with a necessity to remember her feet, and not let them be seen, which small misery should have been offset by the consciousness of having done a good deed, in letting a poor boy who adored

her get a glimpse of her in the first freshness of her Paris pride. But it was a trifle after all; she had a natural loathing to soiling her feet.

"Fate did not mean it to be!" she said.

Then she gathered up her skirts very methodically; she took three well-considered long steps toward the water. She stopped short on a plank and wrinkled her forehead. "He *will* think I wanted to see him!" she said to herself. "No!" she answered herself promptly, "he is not that kind of creature!" and went freely on.

It would be inaccurate to say that as she did so she reviewed the situation between herself and the object of her search; it was, however, very present to her mind. She had a theory, wondering and amused, concerning the circumstance that for several months he had as good as taken up living quarters in her consciousness: and this was, that it was his incessant thinking of her days, and dreaming of her nights, that forced her to think of him.

Others in his case, when she had rejected their proffered hearts, went fading their several ways out of her life, hurt or sorrowful, astonished or even indignant; this insignificant suitor persisted in never letting go to sleep in her for a moment the sense of his warm wound. The manner of his accomplishing this she explained by a theory, close kin to the other. With his point of view ever sympathetically before her, she must, while he drew breath in the neighborhood, feel herself fatal and adorable: a natural beholdenness for the assurance of power she derived from him, an appreciation of his appreciation, it must have been that seemed to be driving her always to flash herself before his already subjugated eyes like a gem in the light. If, revived a little by the beams she shed, he presumed to be urgent, she crushed him; if he dropped off from his tiresome appealing, the obvious conclusion being that he must be languishing in mortal depression at the vanity of all hope of her, common hu-

manity seemed to require that she should rouse and cheer him once more with a glimpse of herself in one of her most bewitching impersonations. Thus alternate vanity and pity, at the same time as entertaining in a bright flicker a fire condemned to extinction, had kept her effectually tied with one to whom she denied even the shadow of a hope of a tie. She might well have had a bad conscience in this matter. As a fact, she had not. First, the idea of anything serious between herself and a youth without possessions, position, or prospects in any degree brilliant, was on the face of it absurd, and this she knew that he knew as well as she; then, he himself would never blame her, whatever she did, he had so much rather she made him miserable than that she let him alone; and then, no one else knew it.

She came to the edge of the pond, an inextensive sheet of water, in shape no nearer round than a hand is, diked in, gurgling off through a trap into a meadow where it wound

out of sight. On all but the dike side, banks of trees, caught here and there in a tangle with big-leaved vines, followed the shore. There was an air of mystery almost about the further end of the pond, where long branches reached over the water, and floating green mats interrupted the glossy reflections of the sky; where a bluish haze filled the gaps in the tree-wall, beyond which were other trees more dimly seen, hemming in, one imagined, wilder, ranker recesses.

A dory lay against the shore, empty.

Nelly perceived her man at a little distance under a knot of pine-trees, on a hump that looked pleasantly dry, and instead of running down to the water, turning boggy and reedy as it went, dropped to it with a steep broken effect. She looked for a fishing-rod. One might be near him on the ground, but he was not fishing. He lay on his back, doing nothing.

She crossed the dike and came over the rising ground, near where he was. Across

the water, up over the trees, she could see the roof of her house and the upper story windows.

"John-Hector!" she called gaily.

The young man jerked himself up and looked about.

"Hello, Nelly!" he said; "it's you." And without special display of solicitude or pleasure he got up. He appeared half sullen, half torpid. But a dark redness, slowly up-creeping, was coming to complicate his summer sunburn. "Why haven't you gone to your party?"

Nelly smiled brightly. "I have come to show you my dress!"

"I don't want to see your dress!" he said, and turned away. He went to the spot he had risen from, threw himself down on his stomach and gazed at the landscape. It would have been difficult to look more unsentimental. He was a good-sized athletic young man, with a thick mat of brown hair that still took boyish gilt high-lights; not posi-

tively handsome, but with a nose that started rather superbly from between his eyebrows, and a deep chin that made good somehow his middle name.

Nelly came nearer, wearing a comedy face, looking about as if for a lost pin, for a place to sit.

He paid no attention to her for a moment; then, hearing rustlings he could not interpret, looked frankly over his shoulder, and saw her seated on his down-turned fish-bucket, her draperies spread wide about her.

"You look like a lovely pen-wiper!" he said, and was forced to smile; the smile was always good to see in his face, committed by its bare lines to an ordinary expression of dignified gloom and obstinacy, which really belied his disposition. He pulled himself a little nearer to her, by his elbows, and allowed himself to look a fraction of the content he was beginning to feel now that it appeared she intended staying a moment.

"Don't you think it was amiable of me to

come, when I am about three hours late?"

"That depends. I don't think you care *that* how late you are at people's houses. And I haven't the least idea that you came just to be good to me."

"How well you know me!" she sighed, looking heavenward. Then she let her eyes decline upon his, and tangled his glance in the blue glance that seemed at her will to take on a golden sunny quality. "You know me so well, don't you, John-Hector? Just like one of your old pockets. It is true that there is little to know."

"No. I don't know you. I don't pretend to. Not that I think girls the mysteries it has become an agreed thing to call them. But you change so. I can't keep track of you. Now if this had happened before yesterday——"

"If what had happened?"

"This. Your coming to let me too have a little look at you in all your glory—I should have thought that you did have a grain of

good nature pure and simple in your composition."

"Oh, the conceit of a man!"

"There! You see? Not a bit of it! Not that I know how what I said could be called conceited. Never fear I shall lay anything you do in reference to me to any motive that could flatter me."

"Why I really came," said Nelly, "was to find out whether my father told you you might fish here. He stocked this pond, you may not know, but he is so good-natured (the good nature you have discovered in me I get from him) that no one takes any notice of the trespass signs. I have overheard him softly cussing about it a dozen times. When from my window I caught sight of the tip of your rod bobbing up and down above the hedge, I said to myself, 'It will be a good deed to warn that young man.'"

"Well, you can't say you found me fishing, can you?"

They did not hunt down this small jest to

its finish; the exercise must have seemed infantile even to them.

After a comfortable silence, during which the beauty of the place and hour made them dimly, luxuriously aware of it, she said, "What were you doing? Just lying there?"

"Sleeping."

She was pleased to see that he had caught interest at last in her gown. She looked down over herself, as he was looking. She stiffened out a ribbon-loop. Then she looked at him, to see how he was pleased. And they looked at each other, half-smiling; in the expression of their eyes suggesting perhaps at that moment to some great immortal unseen observer an affinity with two soft young moths, basking recklessly, the one, in a blinding beautiful beacon-light, the other, curious chilly vagrant, fluttering nearer and nearer out of the cool safe twilight to warm itself at a glowing forge-fire.

"Pretty, isn't it?" she said.

"Stunning!"

"I am glad to hear you praise it."

"You got your feet wet, though," he blurted out, as if he had made a point in some argument.

For a second she looked disconcerted. Then she said with a clear brow, and the easy playful voice of a moment before, "You don't imagine these are the shoes I propose wearing? I am going to put on green ones, to match the grass. Think how absurd white ones would look after half-an-hour walking in Miss Cox's dirty garden walks."

But John-Hector was not heeding what she said. He was absorbed in something on the ground. His face was earthwards, not to be seen.

"You have got your poor little feet wet," he said, and bent his head first over one shoe-toe, then the other, and kissed them.

A laugh came from Nelly, like a bird-note shaken out in mid-flight. Then she said, with a vague unconscious infection in her tone of the tenderness in his, "What a baby

you are! Don't be silly. There! Let go my foot. Let it go, I say!"

But he held on, and appeared to be laughing too, though he scarcely opened his jaws.

"Nelly Brown," he said, "you can deny me whatever you please, and trample on me, and torment me, and tower above me; but never, never shall I be made to share your conviction that even a spattered little shoe like that is too good for me to kiss. No, no, dear"—(Nelly had long wearied of the ineffectual attempt to make him give up calling her dear when they were alone)—"upon my word, I am not going to be bad. I beg your pardon! It was only a little joke. Don't go. Do stay a little while."

"Go and sit off over there, then."

"No, I won't. Let me be where I am. I'll behave myself. Honest. You haven't a bit of mercy on a fellow, have you? Stay and talk a little while. I haven't seen you at all yet. I haven't really seen you for days. I don't call it seeing you when there are

others. You haven't even given me time to admire your dress properly. My word, it is pretty, Nelly! The skirt looks like a big white double petunia, all flaring out and crinkled at the edges."

"A petunia? Horrors!"

"Well, something lovelier, then. How vain you are! I do believe you care for nothing in this world so much as your clothes."

"Of course. Such is my charming nature."

"And why do you care for clothes, I should like to know? God knows He made you pretty. But that is not enough for you; you want to make yourself just as much prettier as is humanly possible. And why? You want everybody to fall in love with you. What right have you to want people to fall in love with you, when you are so determined never to give a crumb in return?"

"There is perhaps a great deal of point in what you say, John-Hector. Should you

advise me to wear my hair plain hereafter? It is frightfully unbecoming, but I should be saved so much time and bother. You have no idea the pains I take with my looks. And all, as I now find, from a mistaken ideal of duty, when I ought instead to have been studying how to spare the sensibilities of the poor strong sex."

"Nelly Brown, look me square in the eyes. Will you tell me that you don't *want* people to fall in love with you?"

Nelly spent a good minute laughing on her bucket, but made no better answer.

"Nelly," said John-Hector darkly, though he had been dragged along by her lengthened laughter into laughing too, "you are not more than twenty. Would you mind telling me how many have been in love with you already?"

"You mean, technically, how many 'offers' I have had?"

"Yes. I have always wondered, as a pure matter of curiosity, how many times an at-

tractive girl might have to deal with that situation. Come, be frank. Four? Five?"

"Hey, my dear boy, you put it too low!"

"I have nothing to go by, you see. Fifty?"

"Hold on! Now you have it a trifle high. I don't believe such a number as that would be likely, except in the case perhaps of some one on the comic stage. I did hear a girl say once that she had had twenty-four declarations of love in a year, but I always misdoubted a lot of them came from the same person. I don't call that counting fair. Should you? Certainly, something like a month apiece is not too much to allow, on an average, to reduce a healthy, well-grown man to a smooth paste——"

"Nelly, it is astonishing to me how horrid nice girls can be!"

"John-Hector," cried Nelly, apparently in the extremity of delight, "say at once that I am vulgar. I heard the other day that Miss

Jarvis had started a rumor that I was vulgar. She must have meant merely that we are *nouveaux riches*. I *am* vulgar, but she can't possibly know it!"

"Miss Jarvis is a fool!"

"Always right, John! It is true I converse with you in this merry little unaffected way—it's good enough for you, John! But when occasion seems to require it, I assure you I can talk like a young lady in a pretty good book. I am off to Miss Cox's now, hoping to find Miss Jarvis there, and make her feel that if she says again I am vulgar, people will know she is envious."

"Oh, don't get up yet. Please stay! Just a minute longer! What will you do at Miss Cox's, after all, of any importance, that you can't just as well do here? There's not a soul will be more impressed this afternoon than I. Devote yourself to fascinating me, Nelly. I am not really properly finished off yet, you know. I can show fight still. There are sparks of pride and will left in me

yet. Perhaps I could be made a little miserabler too."

"And I came all the way from the house up there, I crossed a quagmire, to raise the spirits—of this!"

"You angel, Nelly! Ain't I groveling on the ground before you for it? Why did you leave off laughing? We were both joking, weren't we? Was I rude, dearest? Did it sound as if I felt bitter? You who are so generous—yes, you are! Do you suppose I don't know that no other girl alive would have let me bore her on and on?—can't you put yourself in the place of a fellow who knows he can never get what he wants, and that he can never in nature stop wanting it? Can't you feel for him enough not to go off mad at him when he's on a gridiron?"

Nelly had arisen and taken a few steps under the pine-trees. She turned. "That," she said dryly, "is all nonsense. And it is not even new to me. I remember some one saying almost that very same thing to me

once, and not long after I received his wedding-cards. You can't start an argument with that sort of proposition, you know. It is a widely known fact that these undying passions are straw-fires. A person doesn't have to be any older than I to know it by experience. It is that that gives girls such an easy conscience after all."

"Now, it would be amusing, really, that women should resent rejected men sometimes recovering from the blow. Your voice sounded quite contemptuous. And I wish" (he interpolated querulously) "you wouldn't talk to me about other men! I have not had your vast experience, of course. I can't positively say that I shall always feel as accursed as I do this minute. I hope I sha'n't! But I know this: that it is not possible, while I have the same eyes in my head, and the same sort of organ for heart, that I should see you, and not think of you as I do, and want you accordingly."

Nelly laughed a little emptily, as if at a

silly time-worn compliment. Looking at every second as if about to leave, she yet lingered, listening.

"Oh, good Lord, if everything were different!" exclaimed John-Hector, in a near approach to a groan; "if we were savages on a South Sea island, or even poor working people in the same factory!"

"Now you are going to be tiresome. Now it is really time for me to go. It is a pity that all our scenes should end like this. We begin so pleasantly always, like a pair of good friends, and I think you have turned sensible, and then you go back like this."

"No, I don't. No I'm not. Not at all. But I shall never believe that you wouldn't in time care for me a little, if you would just try. Don't be vexed. It's not conceit. It's simple common sense. If that's not so, all creation is absolutely wrong, and the Almighty didn't know what he was about."

"But listen to me, John-Hector. If I had been going to *try* to care for any one, why

not the first who requested me to? And then on the occasion of our first meeting you would have been presented to the fiancée of Mr. Eddy Bangs, once my book-carrier to Cloverfield grammar-school. How would that have helped your case? And if now, convinced by your argument, I were to make the effort you speak of, how would it help the case of that not unimaginable He of the future, the one that in card-fortune-telling would be referred to as my *fate?*"

"Don't, Nelly! Whoever he is, damn him—(no, no, pardon, dear! but it's what I meant!)—he won't care as I do. He won't care a grain more, anyhow. And he's mere rubbish at the present moment—he's utter, confounded rubbish. And here am I, one sure-enough mass of ploughed-up humanity. As I live, Nelly, I would try to be worthy of you. I know that these matters don't go by merit, though. I should have loved you whatever you had been! And if I had been an Adonis, lined with an archangel, you would

have been just as little likely to care for me. But out of pure gratitude I would try to be whatever sort of man you pleased. I think I could grow religious, just to show Heaven my sense of indebtedness. Oh, there!"—John-Hector broke into a grating laugh—"hear me rant! No wonder it makes you sick! As if I didn't know just how much difference it will make! Oh, I am damned! There are some people, you know, my father among them, who think that when a man is nobody and has nothing to offer, he should not think of marriage. And quite right. Whoever isn't well-off should be made of india-rubber. Good Lord! As if to marry were what I want! It isn't that I want to *marry!* I want *you!*—Go along to your party, Nelly, will you? and let me alone."

"I wish," said Nelly, with a rather blank face, "I wish you wouldn't feel like that!"

"Don't let it trouble you, dearest girl. I know I am a beast to bother you. Don't you feel bad; that is all that really matters.

Go along to Miss Cox's, and think no more about it. I dare say all will happen as you say; some day you will get my wedding-cards, too. Go along, Nelly."

Now was certainly Nelly Brown's cue to go. But she remained under the pine trees, looking at a branch overhead and fingering a little projection in the bark.

"Men," she said after a considerable silence, "are such curious beings!"

"Men," she said, after another silence, "are certainly the most extraordinary animal I have ever had anything to do with."

John-Hector was flinging bits of stuff off the ground into the water.

"Men," began Nelly again, and broke off, laughing rather nervously, "well, if there is any logic in them, it is too well hidden for me to find!"

"The things you are saying," remarked John-Hector, in an unamiable tone, without looking around at her, "are *usually* said of your sex."

"Oh, women are consistency itself by the side of men. I wonder, intelligent as you sometimes appear to be—you down there!—that you have never been struck by certain facts. For instance—— But no. Good afternoon. If a person doesn't see such things for himself, there can be no use in pointing them out."

"Go on, Nelly. Go on and tell me. What were you going to say?"

"No, on second thoughts, I must really hurry home. I shouldn't know exactly how to put it, anyhow. And if I did, you might not understand it."

"Oh, don't tease me! In such a fix as I am I ought to be almost sacred. You shouldn't tease me. Let me hear what it was—about men."

"Well, you, for instance, there, you long, strong, lazy, sprawling boy on the ground. You pretend to care the everlasting world about me. You get so indignant when I pretend not to believe you. You make a

show of modesty, too, and acknowledge that you are not good enough for me. You are at this point of life rather a failure, confess. Oh, I am not saying this to be brutal! I sympathize with all my heart. All your folks have you in their black books. You got into scrape after scrape at college. You slighted your work for certain sports and amusements, and when you were qualified to astonish all in these, your father interfered because you were not a more creditable student. Oh, I know all about it—who doesn't? And you crawled through your examinations, and every one is thoroughly disgusted with you. Oh, not I, John dear. *I* can see how it happened. I should probably have been one of the bad boys myself. Still, I shouldn't be exactly proud of you, if you belonged to me. And now when, as it goes without saying, I have refused you, you sit down and mope."

"Stop, Nelly! Don't rub where it is raw. I know I am a worm. I am out and out demoralized, I know. But you won't have to

put up with me much longer, nor will any one else. I am going out West, presently, to shift for myself. I have been putting it off from week to week, to get up the resolution to leave you."

"And that will be a pretty end to make! Of a piece with all the rest! A proper return to your poor father and folks who scrimmaged to send you to college. Why should I pretend not to know it? And your father's ambition for you was that you too should be a doctor."

"Don't speak of them. I don't feel bound to them, Nelly, one atom, whatever I might have felt if it had turned out a success. All they did for me, they have taken their payment for it out of me since my return home."

"There, you see? And that is the kind of creature you have been pressing upon me, and marveling, I dare say, in your heart at my uneagerness to have."

"No, Nelly. Do stop! I fell in love with you—I couldn't help that, could I?—

and acted after my kind in telling you. We are selfish brutes, it is a fact. But I have never had any real hope. But between that and absolutely giving up and packing off, there is a step. You can't understand these things, Nelly; how could you? Imagine that I have the morphine habit, and that seeing you is my little dose of peace, and that I haven't been able to break myself of it all at once."

"And now, when you shall have become thoroughly convinced that you won't do for me, you are going away, in disgrace with everybody, to lose yourself obscurely in the crowd."

"My dearest, if you knew the little I care what happens after I leave this place! All I know beyond *you* is that I can't bear any longer to be dependent on my father. He makes it the devil."

"Come, haven't you deserved it? Come! As I was saying, you are off to follow your bad beginning in the way least chafing to

your pride. When all is said, you will have uttered a hundred thousand words of love to me, and not done one first little thing to prove them. You will have absolutely tried to earn me with words alone, and shadowing me about, and a pair of kisses on my shoes!"

"Nelly!" said John-Hector, half rising, "wait, dear! Do you mean—do you mean that if——"

"No, no, no," said Nelly, quickly, "that is not the point. I am placed altogether out of the question. The point is not whether I, under any possible circumstances, could care for you, but how you, caring for me as you swear by your great gods beyond every earthly thing, can settle down, poor-spirited, ineffectual, unconsidered and inconsiderable, and be satisfied that your wooing has been a tribute!"

"Nelly," said John-Hector, whose face wore a very wide-open look, "wait! I don't entirely grasp—I know I am a fool—

but if—oh, Nelly, dear Nelly, are you being an angel to me?"

"No!" cried Nelly, irritably, and stamped her foot. "That's not it at all! That has nothing to do with it! You are very much mistaken if you think I have been occupied with showing you a way. I knew you had a vulgar mind, and wouldn't understand, that was why I preferred to hold my tongue. I have simply pointed out to you how insulting your attitude might be called. It is my ruffled vanity that speaks. It is my offended artistic sense. That a man who can't get me, insignificant as he is, should not even have it occur to him to become the most splendid fellow in the world, to see if it would make a difference. The point is not whether it would. I may know full well that it would not, but that it is my part to know, not his. If his devotion were not the provisional sort, if he were one-half the lover he declares, he ought to wish to try everything, yes, everything, without even the

shadow of a hope! That is why I said that men are the funniest spectacle under the sun, because they wonder at women not putting strict faith in their protestations, when nothing has shown they are not hollow, and it is the fable and laughter of the ages that they are hollow! They say: 'I would make myself worthy of you, if'—Yes, *if!* When everything was past taking back, the lady would discover at her leisure just how worthy the gentleman meant to become. Why won't he become worthy of her first, if for nothing but the compliment of the thing? 'Yes,' say you, 'and by the time he was worthy, she might have become united to some one else, good enough at the outset.' 'Well,' then say I, 'what harm would it do him to be worthy? He would be left, at all events, with a valuable souvenir of the girl!'"

"Nelly," said John-Hector, now through and through bestirred, "I am going to Germany to work like a dog for that doctor's

degree. I will get it, I swear to you. Is there nothing you want between this and my leaving? Shall I get you down the moon?—No, no, darling, don't say it all over again; that it will make no difference whatever to you personally. Don't seem so deadly afraid that I shall have even the faintest glimmering hope of a reward. Please don't talk to me about your artistic sense. (Aren't you ashamed!) I am going to eat husks at my father's hands, and take lectures from them all, and be patted on the head, and embrace the life of a reform school—but not, let me warn you, with any of the vague lover's ideals you hold up to me. I'm not a fellow in a book. I must have my own dream to put heart into me. It may be as empty as you want to make sure I shall believe, but I am not going to believe it! No, no, dear; don't say what you are going to! Don't spoil all—don't take everything back and make me worse off than before. Be a kind dear—just keep silent! What harm will it

do to you, if you are finally determined to break my heart, that for a little while I should have imagined things? And I have an artistic sense, too, and that is rasped, let me tell you, when you seem to be laying the ground already for a defence of yourself in some distant emergency against the imputation of having given me the slightest claim upon you. Am I such a low brute that I shall ever reproach you, whatever happens? I have no vestige of claim, that is understood. I belong to you, not you to me. But if, when I come back, I find at your side that not impossible He you tactfully referred to, I am going to kill him, that is all. For there is not going to be any *fate* but me, Nelly; get that well into your darling head!"

"You are very stupid!" faltered Nelly, with a sniff and small grimace that smoothed itself out to a little air of patience and disdain.

But John-Hector was too far gone over on

the side of bliss to recover his balance at once. He burst into a happy laugh, and came nearer over the moss. He had throughout the interview refrained from rising, as one does to keep another from going.

"Make yourself look as tall as you please," he now said, "and white as an angel, and forbidding as a princess. You shall be just as you please. You shall be queen. Set me as hard tasks as you choose, I am going to accomplish them. Put up what barriers you please between us, I am going to cross them. And if in the end it is all nothing—why, God bless you, dearest! God bless you a thousand thousand times, the best and dearest thing he ever made!" And John-Hector who had got near enough bent his head again over her shoes, and with an inarticulate sound of caress and laughter, kissed them. Then he looked up, smiling to her, where she stood and could not find her voice; and gathering boldness from Heaven knew what circumstance, kissed the gloved hand at her side;

and when she put it behind her, kissed its place on her white dress.

Nelly afterwards in reflecting on the scene could not conceive what she had been doing while all this happened; she thought she must have had a lapse from common consciousness; for when John-Hector got to his feet and stood over her, she seemed to come to herself with a little shock. As she recalled the impression of the moment, his eyes, which were nearer than ever before, seen at that range looked truer, profounder, more dedicated, than she could have known had they always preserved their distance. There was something in them that disarmed, that made it suddenly seem ridiculous and petty to fortify oneself against them with a remembrance of the conventions of the world. She knew she had cried out, "No, no, no!" and gasped as if fallen in icy water, and pushed; but she could not assure herself that she had valiantly and single-mindedly and to the end avoided his lips. So possible

had it seemed that even in his ardent preoccupation he might have distinguished it, if so were that in a rising tide of sweet feeling she could not explain she had relaxed for a second in his hold and become as good as his accomplice, that afterwards, when their faces were well apart, she could not find the ready hypocrisy to make a show of indignation. She laughed instead an awkward, tremulous little laugh; and they looked at each other—then she looked away, anywhere, and knew, without a word being spoken, that it was agreed between them no reference should ever be made to this matter.

"Now, surely, it is time for me to go," said Nelly.

"I will go with you," said John-Hector readily. "I will lift you across the bad places."

"Don't believe it!"

"We shall know better afterwards what to believe, little Nelly, don't you think?"

"If you touch me," she said petulantly,

"I will never speak to you again, that is all."

"Very well, dearest; you shall wet your little feet some more!"

As they went, they came to chatting in a light-minded strain, not much considering what was said. John-Hector grew more extraordinarily jolly, Nelly more reserved with every step.

At the fence, it was a haughty damsel who, when her swain desired to help her over it, ordered, "Take down the bars!"

When she had been obeyed, she dismissed her companion and continued the way alone.

Chief among her feelings was, perhaps, at the moment, exulting satisfaction in her lover's manner of being: brusque and cold and rather formidable with all the world beside, with her such a dear, tender fool.

On her way to Miss Cox's she seemed to be pleading a cause with the World which is too much with us. "No," she said at one stage of the defence, "it cannot be wrong.

In cases of a lesser feeling, I grant you. But where a man loves you more than his life, it is not wrong." And later she opposed the World's further caviling with a heated, ironical, "Surely, where a man's thought is always and always wrapping you about, and it can by no means known be prevented, it would be nonsense to make an astonished clamor when for once his sentiment slips into expressing itself by a natural outward symbol. Besides"—she summed up the case and dismissed the World—"it is no business of yours. It is strictly my personal affair."

She leaned back in the carriage.

She wondered to see Miss Cox's gate-posts flash past. She became awake to figures moving in the distance. It did not seem possible that it was still the day on which she had sent Murrie ahead to herald her to this assembly.



For several days Nelly Brown avoided John-Hector. She did not go to the places where she was looked for; she did not leave the house at her usual hours; she followed an unfailing intuition of the time at which he would call: he could never find her in. Once she saw him posted near the road, and in a spirit of wicked fun, drove past at such a rate that he could not very well stop the carriage. She retained a vision of his face. It vexed her: a man should be successful in these matters.

She knew that after this he would haunt the immediate neighborhood, and her last ruse was to leave the house by a seldom used side-door. She feared it would be her last, though she meant still to see what could be done.

She was going to Miss Cox's again; this time, to lend her decorative person to a tableau. She was to figure as the Rose, and Miss Cox's nephew as the Nightingale. She was in pink from her top-knot to her toes; his part was to perch on a low tree-limb and sing to her.

The Holmeses did not frequent the Coxes, a six-mile drive removed.

Before the evening was half over, Nelly caught sight of John-Hector among the guests. Her nerves gave a little leap; she wanted to laugh aloud, while feeling fantastically like some nimble spotty-felled game when the huntsman is near.

The tall young man looked impressive this evening. He, so careless of dress, had

dressed with complimentary scrupulosity. It interested her to see him among other men; to measure him with an attempted impersonal eye against them; to constate how near impossible it would be to make him look ridiculous or insignificant. Some idiosyncrasy in her was gratified by the assurance that no one could divine his heart from his face. He appeared self-possessed and indifferent, while experiencing transports, as she believed, in watching the pink spot she made, and his opportunity to approach her.

She made it difficult; she talked engrossingly to this one and that; and while she did so, grew prettier and prettier, as if a rose by choosing could intensify its sweetness.

But at last John-Hector loomed over her; at last she was forced to look up. And then, even as she was smiling, she saw in his face a look of such glaring gaiety, stalking, uncompromising bliss, that she was irritated. She felt, what she had not until that moment, that a finger had been laid on her lib-

erty. She felt as if some end of her draperies or of her hair had been caught among wheels that would softly, inexorably gather in all of her. The novel happiness he innocently let appear in his eyes as they dwelt on the rose-colored vision that was she, seemed to intimate a change supposed by him in their relations. And what change could it be which induced this apparent beginning of security on his part? The idea of fetters was laid on her, and that inspired a frenzied need to wave her arms, and show how free they were.

The foolish bliss did not long endure in John-Hector's eyes. They grew gloomy, and then fairly angry. He left her side abruptly, and later made a spectacle of himself, as it seemed to her, by hovering near with a face of Night while she openly coquetted with young Cox.

He managed to waylay her toward the evening's end, and force her into a window-corner, where they quarreled bitterly.

She came home excited beyond any experience of hers, disgusted with the entire world and all life.

Murrie Jefferson lingered in the room, chatting at her while she undressed; yea, a long while after, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Do go, dear!" Nelly begged at last; "do get to bed and let me sleep."

But sleep did not come to Nelly with the opportunity. She looked for something to induce artificial unconsciousness; but Murrie had carried off the sulfonal—at least it was gone. She set a lamp beside her bed, and in despair tried to read. At last she gave herself over simply and heart-wholly to hating John-Hector. The boor—the brute—the chump—the conceited donkey! (The author grieves, but those are the expressions used by Nelly.) Where on earth had her wits been when she—was it possible?—had allowed such a creature to imagine—She rubbed her sleeve across her lips and made a sick-

ened face, trying to shut off the springs of memory.

But vainly. What an alluring, shining, painted bubble it had been! She could have cried, if she had not been so angry still. An idiotic bubble! Whence do the like of it arise? One ought to be more seriously warned against them; it is too stupid believing in them even for a moment. But then the whole situation between men and women is frantically stupid. Well, she should not be troubled with John-Hector thereafter; so much at least was sure. He had shown himself in his true colors. At the same time she was aware of having forced him to quarrel. She nowise knew in what manner he could have avoided her wrath, once roused at seeing him look happy as only one should look who triumphs. She granted that she would have despised him if he had not revolted at her treatment. This reflection, however, did not soothe her, or hinder her resolution never willingly to see him again.

Nor would she ever again in her life allow one of his sex to come within six feet of her.

And upon this she must sleep. She could no longer endure the singular ill-being afflicting her, as if some vital element had mysteriously been withdrawn from her blood. She got up; she intended to go to Murrie for the powders, and to take half a dozen adult doses. The disturbance in her mind had created a sympathetic disturbance in her heart; it was beating and burning unpleasantly.

As she passed the open window she thought, with a little shock, that very probably John-Hector was under it. This idea must have been suggested to her by some sound outside. She stood still, ready to laugh.

"What nonsense!" she reflected; "he has been at home in bed these hours!"

She crept to the window and peered through the lace curtain. She could distin-

guish, under a tree, the pale round of a straw hat.

"Let him stand there!" she said, bloodthirstily.

Instead of going for the stupefying drug, she got into bed again. Owing, perhaps, to the motion of getting up, the long inhalation of cool night air, the nervous quality was gone from her wakefulness. She could have slept, but that the sense of some one outside in the discomfort of standing in the dew prevented her; curiosity, too, and vindictive amusement. At last she became uneasy, and still more uneasy.

"What an idiot he is!" she said impatiently. "Why doesn't he go home?"

She lay a little longer, listening; then, with a jump reached the window, and leaning forth, with the curtains held to her throat, sent a loud whisper toward the pale disk: "John-Hector Holmes, go *straight* home!"

The disk moved, came nearer, was tilted and foreshortened.

"Nelly!" said John-Hector in a very subdued voice. "Nelly!"

"Go straight home!"

"Yes, I will, dear. But say first you aren't mad with me. Say it's all right."

"Go *right* away, John. I am not going to have any discussion with you at this hour, you may believe. I wish you to go home and let me sleep in peace. Good night."

"Oh, Nelly, don't be mean! How can I go? I will be off as soon as you have said you won't save up this evening against me. Upon my word, I don't know what happened, dear. I must have behaved very badly, I know. I beg your pardon! But you shouldn't make me jealous! I am not accountable. Really, Nelly, you oughtn't to suppose I could stand quietly by and see you flirt as you were doing with that dude."

"I have always, so far, reserved for myself the privilege of doing exactly as I pleased."

"Of course, you can do exactly as

you please. But if you only knew how it feels to me! I may as well tell you that I shall always, to my dying day, be jealous. But I promise not to make scenes about it like to-night. Just say you will forget it! I was in such a good humor, too. I don't see how it all happened. I was overjoyed at having caught up with you at last, after chasing you these days. You did it on purpose, Nelly, I know. Why, dear?"

"I wish you a very good-night."

"Oh, Nelly—no, Nelly—please don't go! Say everything is as before. Do!"

"I have very distinctly requested you to go home."

"I won't. I am going to stay where I am. Why should I go to bed just because it is a certain hour and others have gone? I have a fancy for seeing the sunrise from this spot. Oh, dearest, don't be hard—Nelly!"

Nelly had left the window. John-Hector whispered as loud as he could, and this proving ineffectual, raised his voice a very little.

Nelly found herself forced, by the fear of his being heard by some one else, to return to the window.

"John-Hector!" she whispered, indignantly, "this is pretty conduct!"

"Darling!" said John-Hector, with the cringing imploringness of a child; "don't make me be bad. It's your own fault. You have only to say it's all right, and I will go like a lamb. I simply can't go and have you lying there thinking over my bad conduct, and the night magnifying all. If you forgive me before sleeping, it will be as if it had never been. What can I do to make you? Tell me yourself what to do!"

"I will throw something at you directly."

"Do, dear! I will catch it. Throw me the pink flowers you wore. You did look like one big sweet rose, you thorny girl! It was a pity your nightingale sang off the key."

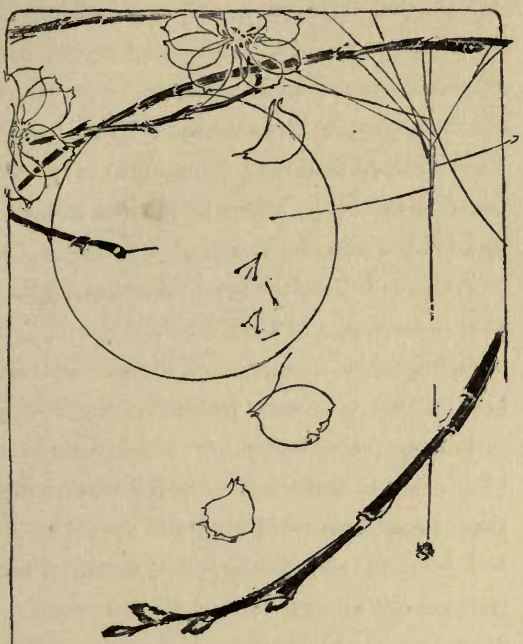
"Do you call that showing a proper spirit of penitence, John-Hector?"

"Your nightingale had a remarkably good ear. As long as we both heard him, what does it matter how I qualify his singing? Ah, don't be adamant! It is so easy for you to torment me, it oughtn't to seem worth your while. Throw me the flowers, darling, if you have sworn not to say you are friends with me. Throw me something, then, as a sign, and I will go."

Nelly, after a moment, pitched at him with all her strength a large French-English dictionary. He caught it easily, with a hushed laugh, and kissed it audibly, asking in a hollow whisper, "Is it your Bible?"

Nelly, in bed, laughing to herself, heard after several faintest Nellies nothing more.

She composed herself luxuriously to sleep. She said, "He is a dear boy, after all."



SHE was so sure of nothing, the next day, as that he would try to see her. She took no step to avoid him. But, against all rule of likelihood, John-

Hector did not appear. She saw nothing of him for several days. In that space her disposition toward him changed many times. At last—it was Nelly's mental exclamation—she received a note from him. He was ready to leave; he asked permission to come and bid her good-bye.

Nelly called for the most ravishing raiment she possessed. Murrie inquired of herself who might be coming. She merely did not ask, because time must inevitably show.

When John-Hector arrived, Murrie was vicariously disconcerted. She felt that friendship almost demanded that she should catch and bear off this young man, surely in the way to-night. She wondered as the evening wore on what had become of the other caller, the one for whom preparation had been made.

Nelly and John-Hector sat in her parlor, youthful feminine dream in dove-color and gold, with tall, delicate, painted panels. He had put on, somewhat eccentrically for this quiet country call, evening dress; a triple

carnation flowered his buttonhole. Nelly and he looked ready to start for a party.

They talked together in accordance with the civilized splendor of their clothes. They were formal and polite toward each other, as if they had been distinguished persons, and only slightly acquainted. Miss Jarvis might have been within ear-shot.

The several doors of the parlor were open. Murrie came in once or twice with worried eyebrows, and joined in conversation with the pair. But not for long; she was playing three-handed euchre with Mr. and Mrs. Brown, who considered it a favor to be let off from seeing Nelly's company.

John-Hector rose and appeared to be looking for something. He came back to his seat with a photograph-case. He turned over the contents; Nelly, slightly bending toward him, told him the names and conditions of the photographed.

"Why is there no picture of you?" asked John-Hector.

"Oh, there are quantities of them; but not there. I don't keep myself among my friends. Let me see," she added, with a show of ingenuousness so perfect that it may have been assumed. "I think there is one of my last in the Japanese box, on the table; if not, it must be in the little drawer."

"I am not going to ask for it," said John-Hector, grinning like himself of a working-day; "I only want to know where it is."

He seemed to be wearying of the atmosphere of the palely sumptuous room. He got up several times to look out at the window.

"How lovely it is outside!" he exclaimed, with simple craft. "How much one loses by staying in the house. Don't you think so? I wish you would allow me to carry the sofa-cushions on to the piazza-steps. It is divine out there. Aren't you fond of nature, Miss Brown? I really ought to have it on my conscience to keep you indoors on such a night. Did you say I might move the cushions?"

Nelly said nothing in assent or in dissent, but lazily arose; and when, unforbidden, he had conveyed the pillows to the moonlit steps, made no real difficulty to precede him through the window-door, and let herself be made comfortable on them.

"There!" said John-Hector with a long breath, taking the step at her feet, "this is better."

Nelly unthinkingly let out a long breath too, which had the effect of an echo.

He placed himself so that he could watch her face.

"I am going to look at you all this evening," he said, so low that she could pretend not to hear, "because I shall not see you for such a long time."

They spoke more freely at once than within under the listening walls. They spoke of the long adventure he was starting upon. They discussed homely matters of concern to him, like a knightly brother advising with his wise young sister. He was perfect

this evening; humble, intuitive, unobtrusively tender, treating her like a very princess.

She wondered a little, while they talked in the moonlight that turned the distant city of glass into a white, shimmering, unearthly city, at the flippancy she remembered in their talks before, her slanginess, his bluntness. To-night they spoke so differently.

It came home to her by one first little point that there was something fateful in these moments, something final. She woke to it with the startled sense of having overslept, and needing now to haste: so little time left, and so much to be said—She did not know what. To-morrow he would be gone; this good, habitual, solid, warm-blooded John-Hector would have taken on the tragic quality of being absent, which is the first effect of being dead—

"Let us get up and walk," she said abruptly.

She realized that he was realizing too. She wondered how it felt to him, and of a

sudden felt curiously unstrung herself, not sure of her voice. They walked at random, uneasy, conversation dead between them. She looked with preoccupied lifted brows at the moon, and he with a preoccupied frown on the ground. As they came to the end of a walk and she was turning, John-Hector said, as if bursting through an oppressive disguise :

"Nelly, I am going away!" And she found him kneeling, saying : "Make me all right to go, dear. Give me a blessing!"

It did not seem ridiculous, because they were out of the light, and no one saw it but herself.

She felt confusedly that she scarcely knew how a blessing should be given. She laid her hands on his head; the feeling of it devotionally bowed under her palms touched her unaccountably; a climbing sadness threatened to choke her. Impulsively he put his arms around her knees and pressed his face against her. She caught her breath, shaken and uncertain, then merely readjusted her balance.

It would have been inane to scold him in this last minute, when so much time must pass before he could show improvement from any lesson she gave, or yet repeat the offence. And then—and then — why scold? The touch of true love is so reverent. Why do violence to one's proper reason to fall in with laws of a world one does not even respect? Why affect a repugnance one does not feel? And then—and then—this was no time to weigh matters; in the long days ahead, with the strong bias of his presence removed, she could think to some purpose, and set her heart scrupulously in order. If she were cruel in such a moment, she might be grieved at it afterwards, when he was gone and amends were impossible. She placed her hands on his hair again, unsolicited, and warmly pressed the blessing down.

"Thank you, dearest," murmured John-Hector. They resumed their walk in a silence charged with large indefinite feeling.

At a division in the paths, she was taking

the one that led toward the house; John-Hector apparently not seeing this, took the other, and abstractedly she followed his lead. They came under an arching trellis. John-Hector in its shadow murmured so prayerfully, "Say good-bye to me!" that it did not seem in nature to make an instantaneous brutal, refusing outcry; besides, that would at once have created a situation; besides, it seemed to her that she must have known, when she accepted this path, whither it led. She thought, one brief moment, her head held with respectful firmness against a broadcloth shoulder, how comfortable if one might at the same time as retaining all the prestige of pride, be simple and natural and let one's head lie——

"Let me go!" she exclaimed, fretfully.

And he murmured, "I beg your pardon!"

As they came into the moonlight, at several yards distance from each other, she rested with a confused comfort on the unspoken pact that the attitude should be pre-

served between them of her severity never having relented.

But the atmosphere was changed; there was no use in staying out further, drawing out longer the good-bye moments. She turned homeward unappealed to.

"You will write me, won't you?" said John-Hector, as they entered the house. He gave to the interrogative form the calm tone of statement.

"No, indeed," quickly replied Nelly, and turned toward him in the yellow lamplight, another girl entirely—a girl distinctly in a state of reaction, taken back to herself, cold and committed to nothing by their embraces.

"Oh!" cried John-Hector, in soreness and surprise.

"Certainly not!"

John-Hector began teasing. But Nelly, tired out, stiffened more at each attack. She only yielded to the point of saying, when at the end of their argument she saw his absurdly confounded condition:

"No doubt I shall see your sisters sometimes. They will be in communication with you and inform you probably of anything important happening in Cloverfield. Go now, John-Hector. Don't you see? The lamp is going out. I don't want to ask for another. How still the house is! Listen! I believe they have, every soul of them, gone to bed. It must be frightfully late. Some one just out of sight is watching and listening for you to go, so that the hall-light can be put out and the front door locked. Doesn't it make you nervous?"

Getting himself under control, he took leave of her ceremoniously by the dying glimmer of the lamp.

Wearily Nelly climbed the stairs, more conscious than of any other emotion of a superficial vexation at the circumstance of the lamp.

"I must really instruct Mary-Jane to look better after her lamps!" she said.



Five

THE first days of John-Hector's absence drew themselves out to a surprising length: a sense of emptiness accompanied the pleasant regained sense of freedom. John-Hector's presence in Cloverfield had been latterly a strain on the nervous sensibilities; but the removal of the strain was not succeeded altogether by well-being. Nelly found herself at loss for a satisfactory substitutional occupation. She resisted as often as it arose a desire to walk alone and meditate. She had it to struggle with every few moments.

A letter came to her written from the ship that bore John-Hector to Bremen. He wrote again on touching land, and by every trans-atlantic mail after that, for several weeks. He thought Nelly could not have meant what she said; he thought she could be softened. Nelly melted and congealed again many times, but dismissed at last a vastest inclination to be very woman and reply. Could he but know, if she wrote, how much the worse for him! She must be free, or—she knew her ways—she would repent, and her struggle begin at once to disentangle herself. The sense was insufferable to her of a future definitely entailed. She wished him as well to feel tied to her during this separation by nothing but a point in his own mind. When he was grown expectant of nothing, perhaps—perhaps she would send him something.

The parting scene between them was insensibly altered in its values to her memory. The beauty of the night, which had scarcely affected her at all at the time of it, asserted

its poetic importance as a background; so that she could say in retrospect with the lovers from Venice, "In such a night—" Their remembered conversation, weeded by a natural unconscious selection, was worthy in its final revision of being laid aside in the spirit's pleasant treasure-house, with dried roses, as it were, between its pages. Remembrance of the constraints, the minute mal-à-propos, the uncertainties, the conflicts of mind, that had kept that last interview from being conscious of itself as an event full of blessed conditions, was lost in remembrance of the sincere love that had undoubtedly been expressed to her in its course.

She was not well acquainted with the Holmeses, though Dr. Holmes was the family physician, and two of the girls as children had been schoolmates of hers, and her mother knew the whole family well, as she did every one in Cloverfield. Nelly had been absent for long spaces in the last years; her friends had been principally made in New York. On

reviewing her impressions of John-Hector's people, she resolved with belated regret that they did not like her. Considering more closely, she saw that what she laid to the Holmeses in general was justly applicable only to Ethel Holmes, the one nearest in age to John-Hector, and his favorite. Ethel was quiet and studious; she showed in her face what was spoken of as a great deal of character. She had always had to Nelly an effect of looking down upon her. Sure of abundant appreciation in so many quarters, Nelly had passed this fact light-heartedly over. Now her thought turned to Ethel, as if the other members of the family had not counted.

She did not wish to call, quite; the call might prove stiff and lead to a simple returned call, or it might be thought more significant than it was—his sisters could not be totally ignorant of John-Hector's affairs; or yet, Ethel might, characteristically, on hearing the visitor announced, slip out and leave the boresome social duty to others.

Cloverfield was accustomed to the sight of Ethel and a dog walking off toward the woods. Nelly had a yellow cart and a mild-mannered horse which she drove in person with a very tall whip. She turned it into the autumn woods; she wandered over the fading environs of Cloverfield. She lost her way several times; but one day she found Ethel.

Nelly recognized her back; she knew that the girl had seen her and was trying to get away unbespoken.

"Miss Holmes!" she called sweetly.

Ethel turned and waited where she stood.

Nelly, as she drove up to Ethel, wore the expression of one who is blushing; she smiled to her, and looked intentionally pretty and soft and engaging; her eyes had their sunny quality.

"Do get in, Miss Holmes," she said, "and let me drive you."

"No, I thank you," answered Ethel; "I walk for the fun or it."

She looked at Nelly defensively from under the visor of a boy's cap. She had John-Hector's strongly marked eyebrows, over colder, darker eyes; her nose started downward at the same angle as her brother's, but its bold line was not wholly pleasing in a woman's face; her smile, like his, was an illumination; there was a hint of sarcasm, however, in the lines it made, not observable in John-Hector's. Nelly watched her lips with a little nondescript feeling at seeing John-Hector's strong front teeth framed in a smile untinged with any allegiance to her.

"I can never see," said Nelly, "how one can walk for fun. I would never take a step if I could help it;" and she was aware of Ethel's contempt. "I know, of course, what a bad thing that is," she added; "I own that no one so lazy should be allowed to encumber the earth. I believe *I* am that American who was born tired!—Aren't the woods lovely at this season?"

She would not let Ethel go, though she

more than suspected her impatience. She detained her with one trivial remark after another, uncomfortably aware that with the sense of disadvantage weighing upon her, she could not hope to talk like anything but a fool.

At the end of ten minutes, she said, "But I must not keep you standing in the road. I have kept you so long—Miss Holmes, *do* get in and let me drive you!" And, to Nelly's surprise, with this request a second time uttered, Ethel complied.

Instantly, all was different with Nelly; instantly, she could be her proper self, and talk cosily, and practice her little mode of being charming.

Before the end of their drive, Nelly was sure her companion said to herself, "She is different from my idea of her. She is a quite possible person!" And that modest praise elated her. For Nelly knew how difficult it was for a girl of her kind to make the conquest of a girl of Ethel's kind, where they had

scarcely an idea in common; and she into the bargain had probably in its rounded perfection every quality and condition that Ethel despised. Ethel, for one instance, cared enormously and discriminatingly for books; Nelly, sickly in her growing days, with the freedom to do much as she chose in the matter of her education as in every other matter, had learned just as little as a person can and go to school. It may be owned that she had never felt her lack of knowledge of the printed word an appreciable disadvantage to her. She was blessed with a pretty instinct for the moment when it will be best to keep still. With this, and a sensitized intelligence for all the information running wild, a marked gift for taking her tone from the company she was in, and, to be candid, an alloy of fine, fine brass, she would not have shrunken from mingling in any society; she would have engaged to make a creditable figure at royal courts. But to meet at such close range a girl like Ethel, with those de-

liberative calm eyes, a girl who knew all about one beforehand, and whom one was over-eager to impress happily, was another matter. If Ethel had been a young man, her eyes might have been indefinitely more critical, yet Nelly would not have been discomposed by them. Nelly felt herself fitted by nature to deal effectively with man; she had the inborn confidence that goes with a great gift. Just in proportion as her assurance with man was great, was great her secret diffidence with the women she cared to please.

It was a bewildering consideration to her that Ethel, if she were given to contemplate an alliance between her brother and the girl beside her, would hold it a mismatch and a misfortune for him. And yet, thought Nelly, urging herself on to hope for a bettering of this situation, it could not be possible to know her really well and withhold from her all liking and good opinion; one must give her credit for certain poor little virtues,

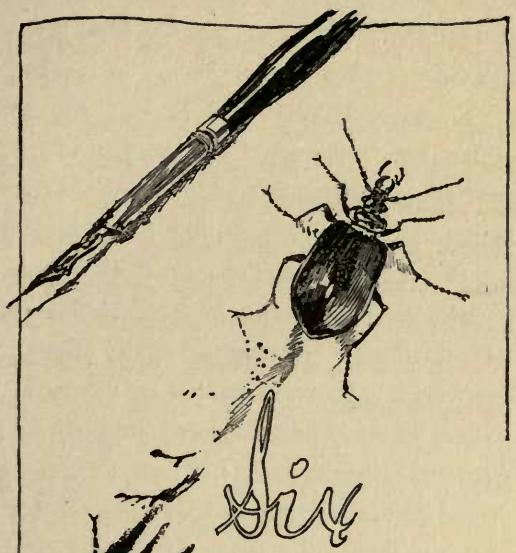
such as well-meaningness and natural good sense.

When she perceived in Ethel toward the end of their drive an increase of friendliness, she laid it to her intelligent companion's apprehension of those humble hidden virtues.

They did not once refer to John-Hector during their drive; yet both were conscious of him as the real reason for the relation springing up between them. In the better acquaintance following, that was lost sight of in a sincere, incongruous personal liking for each other, the principal feature of which was a capacity to laugh when they were together at almost anything. They required no other ground than a shared perception of the funny side of things to get along beautifully, as Nelly expressed it, in reply to the jealously-inclined Murrie's inquiry, "What on earth do you see in that girl?"

Ethel came to Nelly's house, and sat in a hammock with her, eating chocolates, just like a girl not cursed with mind; and drove

in her yellow cart, and went home grateful with armfuls of hot-house flowers. Nelly went to her house, and often, waiting in the sitting-room for some one to come down, had leisure to examine photographs of John-Hector at various ages; one of him, in a broad collar, with a funny little look of alarm at the camera, and the rudiments only of his Hectorian nose, touched her heart like the sight of a kitten.



So the year declined. Mrs. Jefferson began referring with a sigh to the necessity of taking her departure. The cheerful little woman had private griefs: a vague never-to-be-mentioned husband, two grown-up daughters earning obscure livings at a distance; and, to darken the present by contrast, the

remembrance of past affluence. Mrs. Jefferson did not often indulge herself in speaking of Emma and Adela and F. W., nor yet of her better days. One thought of her generally as a childless widow, amiable to a fault and excellent; open, one knew, though whence the impression could scarcely be told, to invitations to sojourn in agreeable houses, where, while never losing the dignity of guest, she would lighten the burden of life to her hostess by every imaginable accommodation; from arranging the flowers, if there were doubt of the servant's taste, and washing the best china, if there were doubt of her dexterity, to telling her friend's fortune by card, and talking her to sleep.

"What makes you go?" Nelly asked, when Murrie had been inquiring about trains.

"What makes me?" said Murrie, a little taken aback, and thereupon a little expectant. "You will be going yourself in a few days."

"In a few days, but that's not yet. Wait

to go till I go, Murrie. It will be lonesome here without you."

Mr. and Mrs. Brown awoke presently to the fact that Nelly was staying with them long after her planned departure. She had no reason to give beyond repugnance to the small exertion necessary to make ready and leave. As she seemed to her mother unusually pensive in these days, the sweet lady was constantly asking why she did not go where she would be sure to have a good time: urging her not to be guilty of the incivility of keeping her friends, the Taylors, waiting.

"Don't you miss me at all, Ma?" Nelly asked one day, between laughing and, it almost seemed, crying.

"Miss you, ladybird? Now, what a thing to ask! Of course we miss you, every minute of the time. You don't suppose anything in the world could take your place? But you aren't going far, and we know you're going where you'll find it pleasant and it'll be good for you. Cloverfield is no right place for you

all the year round. You must go out and see something of life while you're young. There's time enough ahead for you to settle down and stay at home. It isn't as if we were old folks, or ailing, and afraid to have you go out of our sight for fear we mightn't see you back again. We're busy from week's end to week's end, and we've got each other to depend upon. And we do enjoy getting your letters. Make them just as long as you can find time to, Posy; it's good practice for you. I always did respect any one that could write a good letter. Your father does enjoy hearing of your doings, though it's not his way to say much about it. And I like to think you're thoughtful of your father." ("Always mind your mother!" had been the burden ever of her father's simple instructions.)

Mrs. Brown after this looked with confidence for Nelly's preparations to leave; and seeing none, became somewhat concerned. Waking in the small hours of the night, she shook her husband to talk it over with him.

They watched Nelly, to discover if anything were the matter. In their uncertainty, they let their anxious fondness appear so plainly that Nelly's compunctious heart went out to meet it with demonstrations more tender and frequent than her wont. She coaxed her father to show her his plants, and tell her the whole long story again of the Great War and his part in it. She helped to dress dolls for the Sunday-school Christmas tree; and she bestowed great attention on the winter wardrobe of her mother, of whose good looks she was proud, and to obtain becoming effects for whom she experimented with as much untiring solicitude as for herself.

While she was making her mother's hair into plump puffs, there returned to her mind, curiously sensitive at the moment to influences of a certain order, days in a rough farmhouse, her earliest remembrance, where, whatsoever the stress of household work, this mother had every morning taken time to

arrange her little daughter's hair in decorous curls, smoothed round and round her wet finger. It certainly was no more than graceful in that daughter now to lend her best care to the ordering of these dear tresses. In the same strain of thought Nelly recalled how in that remote farmhouse she had used to take rides on Pa's long boot, from which he scraped off the earth when he came in from the fields. No horse in the stable now was as untiring and good-natured as that hack of her infancy. Nelly remembered in some childish illness of her own — she had been delicate always — this mother once impatiently adjuring that father not to go about the house looking so like a funeral! Of course that was the way the dear would have gone about looking: she saw him! It was an old grief of which Nelly hardly ever took account, that the kindly pair had lost several beloved children before her own birth. She had come into the inheritance of a great accumulation of affection. She took account of it now,

and was oppressed. As she reflected on her darling Pa's attributes, it seemed to Nelly a providence especially thoughtful of her that had practiced the good joke of sending him the money. Gentle David Brown had never made a bargain that the rich intestate deceased from whom he inherited would have called anything but a fool's.

The remorseful consciousness of a cruelty in the dim background of her mind, to be practiced on father and mother, brought the thought of their dearness very close. Their faces smote her. Mingling with people who, as she could not help knowing, would have had smiles for her parents' plain ways, had always had the effect of making her, if anything, honor them more. Deciding that she left all question of heart out of the matter, she attributed her recognition of their title to homage to the sound sense she hoped she inherited from them. She tried sometimes to imagine herself a stranger looking at them: They were two beautiful

human beings; country-bred, indeed, not widely cultivated, but with that complete refinement in their lineaments that comes of life-long discriminating between right and wrong, and choosing right.

No, it was not possible to grieve two such out of hand; the alternative apparently was to ponder the intention that must hurt them till familiarity robbed it of consequence, and to deal the stroke with very slow deliberation.

A letter came to Nelly from Maud Taylor, hurrying her. She kept it a secret, uneasy on her heart, and lingered in Cloverfield, unaccountably, purposelessly, as it seemed, through the monotonous late autumn days. Then suddenly, when Nelly would have said that not a change the size of a man's hand was to be discerned in the prospect, came a change full great in the atmosphere of the house; and Nelly, apprehending in it some secret value to herself, watched its developments narrowly: feeling, while all attention for a moment was diverted from her, a

hope which she had made a conscientious point of nipping, revive, and bourgeon newly.

The poor Jones baby, whose mother, spite of all earthly drops, had succumbed, was brought into the Brown family to be reared. Nelly was touched with wonder to see the happy passion with which her mother, throwing off twenty years, entered into the concern for the temperature of milk and water and little flannel bands. The nieces established themselves in turns, and presently in a force of two, and not long after in a body, in the Brown house, to help out Aunt Hannah, for not one of the old-fashioned hearts could abide the thought of a hired nurse.

Nelly, pressed, accepted the baby from her mother's hands, uncertain for one nervous moment whether what she really wanted was to squeeze and kiss him, or to push him away in inexpressible disgust. Pending clearness on this point, she mechanically drew her lip, as she had seen other women do, across the warm downy head, softer than

anything she had ever felt, smelling engagingly of rice-powder. On the instant, something yielded inside of her; she gave a fond tickled laugh, and burst into gibbering baby-talk, just like the rest, of whose intelligence she had not been thinking well.

"There is one house in Cloverfield provided with work and entertainment for some time to come," she said, returning the breathing bundle to her mother.

When next her mother asked how soon she thought of starting on her visit, she said, as if it had not been a surprising announcement, "I don't think I shall go at all. I have changed my mind."

It was on a Sunday evening. On Sunday evenings it was one of the household pleasures to have a "sing." Nelly, regularly invited by her mother, condescended to play hymns on the parlor-organ and start the singing, dropping out of it as soon as the voices of the others rose in sufficient volume. She did not pretend to play or sing, she freely

said, and said it not without propriety; her fingers stumbled, her voice was wavering and tentative. Mrs. Jefferson, in her younger days an accomplished pianist, always offered to lead the exercises; but Mrs. Brown seemed to prefer the sight of Nelly on the music-stool, and Nelly, after a sigh, lent herself usually with sufficient good grace.

She had just risen from the organ on this occasion, at the end of "Naomi," and taken a cricket near her mother's chair. Her remark was followed by profound silence. She knew that everybody was looking at her in astonishment and inquiry, waiting for an explanation. Abashed, she laid her cheek against her mother's knee, and said, half laughing, "I don't want to go to New York, and gad and dance and frivol, when I can't play a simple little psalm-tune straight."

"Oh, is that what you mean, child! I thought you must be joking. Now, I thought you played real good, with real good feeling,

Posy. I love to hear you, and I wish you'd do it oftener."

"Oh, Ma, you don't know, dear! You don't see plain when you're looking at me. It's cruel to undeceive you. Your precious Nelly is one big fool. And she will go to New York, and waste her time with all sorts of vanities, and be a fool to the end!"

"Now, Posy! I'm not going to let you talk like that. With all the schooling you've had, in New York and Cloverfield too! What you need now is just finishing off with knowledge of life, and that comes of seeing the world, my dear. And you've got as good opportunities as ever girl had. How will it improve you, I should like to know, to stay right here in Cloverfield?"

"I don't want to stay in Cloverfield!" said Nelly, rubbing her enkindled cheek against her mother.

There was another silence. Nelly, without looking, felt all listening intently.

"I want to go to Germany!" she said, in

a conscious, coaxing tone, cuddling up to her mother. "I want to go with Murrie, and devote myself to the improvement of my poor little mind. I want to be able to play 'Coronation' with variations, Ma. I want to play the 'Mocking-Bird,' offhand, like the deacon's wife whenever she's asked. Shouldn't you be proud of me? I guess you would, you and Pa! I swear to you your girl is a dunce from way back! I am just finding it out, and I want to remedy it while it's a possible thing. For the brain gets tough, you know, as we grow older. Let me go to Germany with Murrie, who went there herself to study when she was a girl, and knows all about their ways, and will take such good care of me, won't you, Murrie? Say you will, Ma! Say you will, Pa!"

"Well, I declare!" sighed Mrs. Brown. It filled her with a sort of awe, this contemplation of Nelly in the mood of thinking she was not good enough as she was. All pres-

ent were impressed; Mrs. Jefferson only a little less than the others, and in a different kind. What impressed her was not so much that Nelly should think herself totally lacking in accomplishments, as that the world-loving girl, prizing these, as she must, at no more than their worth, should be willing to forego the exceptional opportunities of her New-York visit, for the sake of acquiring some share of them. Mrs. Jefferson inquired of her knowledge of Nelly the meaning of this phase; it seemed less mature than her other ideas. But she was so interested in the outcome, that she did not question at any length. Her heart had given a frolic leap; rosy visions crowded upon her.

The longer Mrs. Brown, during that night between Sunday and Monday, thought the matter over, the more admirable did it seem to her in her girl to desire to set aside worldly pleasure a while in an interest that might be called spiritual. Her brain, the proud parent knew, was excellently well furnished al-

ready; the more of an exceptional, a superfine nature to thirst for still higher attainment.

Mrs. Brown talked of it with David, in the dark. At last she felt grateful to God in the matter, and did her best to make David share her sentiment.

"Posy has got a notion to go to Germany and study music and what not. She can't be satisfied that she has more than acquirements enough now to get through the world with; and if that is the case, nothing shall stand in her way!" Mrs. Brown said this to Dr. Holmes, who was prescribing for Baby Jones.

In the afternoon Ethel Holmes came to see Nelly. She wore a constrained, not cordial, expression.

"I hear you are going to Germany!" she said at once.

"Yes!" said Nelly; "to study! Imagine me studying, Ethel! I didn't say to learn fancy dances; I said to study — hard — did

you understand me? Isn't it like a change of heart? Isn't it good of them to let me go? I wish that I didn't have to leave you behind, Ethel!" and she embraced her.

"Oh, dear!" cried Ethel, emphatically.

"What is it?" asked Nelly, after a moment, disconcerted at the unresponsiveness of the surface she had kissed.

"I wish you weren't going, that is all!"

"Why, Ethel, what's the matter?"

"I wouldn't give much for all the work John-Hector is likely to do when he knows that you are in the same country, that is certain. And he has been doing so well, and father has — we have all — felt so encouraged. He had got into a bad groove here. It seemed such a point gained when he went over there, away from every one he knew, where he could start fair and square. One can begin all over in a new place. But if you go there, it doesn't take a prophet to foretell that he won't stick to his work."

"My dear, why should you think that?"

"Oh, Nelly, you understand me perfectly. Let's not pretend! You know he was head over heels in love with you. To one knowing him as I do, it showed all over him, plain as a rash."

"No doubt," said Nelly, rather distantly, and lifted her chin part of a degree; "you know him much better than I do. You must know, with the rest, that I am not in correspondence with him, and that unless you or your sisters write it to him yourselves, he will not be in the least likely to know that I am not in New York. I had very much rather he did not, in fact. I understand perfectly the importance of his not being diverted. If it seems to you of sufficient consequence, you can in writing continue giving him news of me just as if I were here, such news as has nothing to do with one's whereabouts; for I will write you, Ethel dear, of course. There is not the slightest chance of our coming upon each other, you know. I am going to a

quite different part of Europe. Dresden is ever so far from Vienna. And Mrs. Jefferson and I are going to live very quietly, and work; I shan't want to be diverted myself any more than you want him to be, I can assure you. And very few will know where I have gone. All that most will know is that I am not in New York."

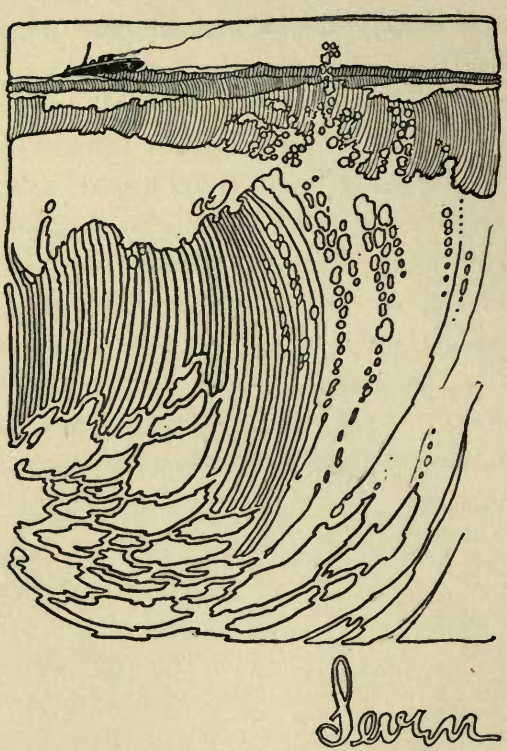
"Well," laughed Ethel, still not genially, "I can't prevent your going, that is certain!"

"And you wouldn't want to if you could!" said Nelly, "knowing for a certainty, from what I have just said, that your precious brother will be no more affected by it than by a humming-bird going south! I wish though that it had turned out, when you were so aggrieved, that your regret at my going was because you would miss me yourself!"

"Oh, I know that I am horrid! But you seem unable to understand how we feel about that miserable boy. I hadn't thought it even necessary to tell you how much I

shall miss you, you frightful little humbug!"

"That's right! Call me names! Abuse me! It makes me feel you're friends with me. Come in here, and I will treat you to my show-piece on the piano. You must preserve it in your mind as 'Before Using,' and have it to compare with my performance when I get back, 'After Using.' Take a long, lingering look, Ethel, at your simple Nelly. When you see her again she may be unfit to speak to from majestic pride and vainglory."



NELLY, waking not many days after in the dark of a winter dawn, felt her bed quiver and creak, and heard on every side thumping

and shuffling that for a second she could not explain. Then she caught sight of a faint gray moon but little above the horizon, and saw very dimly, at her bedside, masses of gray flowers heaped in a wash-bowl.

"Murrie, are you awake?" she whispered.

A voice from overhead, husky and sleepy, but amiable as at high noon, replied, "Yes, dear. Do the sounds disturb you? They are swabbing the deck. Doesn't it seem, when you hear the water swishing so plainly, that you must do something about it or you'll get wet!"

"Are we off?"

"We must be. They said five. It's near day."

"Poor Pa is sound asleep in his bed at the Waldorf. Poor Pa! I am glad he can't watch us grow little and go out. I am glad too that I can't watch him watching us. It is a mercy one can come on board the night before like this and get off unbeknownst. Poor Pa!" she repeated, with an oppressed

bosom; "and Ma too, sound asleep in her bed, away off at Cloverfield, her big four-post bed. No. Ma isn't asleep. She's lying awake in the dark and comforting herself with the supposition that we two are sound asleep. Murrie, I don't see how I could ever do it! To think of it: I couldn't get back home in less than two weeks now, if everything in my whole life depended upon it!"

"My child, no more could I. Let's not look at it like that. Fix your thoughts firmly on the bright side of the situation. We are going off just for the fun of it, aren't we? We mustn't sit down at the very start to think. We are going to have such a good time! Wasn't it nice of the Roderick Courtenays to come all the way down to that out-of-the-world wharf to see us on board? Who do you suppose sent the American Beauties? The messenger-boy had evidently lost the card. Nobody could be so benighted as not to send one."

"Murrie, do you feel at all queer?"

"Not at all. My dear, don't tell me that you do! Not so soon as this! Come! There's not a bit of motion yet! What do you feel?"

"Murrie, I shall not try to describe my sensations. I hope with you that they point to nothing. Only, if you can reach the bell, press it. If the stewardess doesn't come and take away those lilies-of-the-valley, I shall hate lilies-of-the-valley the rest of my life. I feel as if I'd eaten them now!"

For a weary period following upon this remark, Nelly, when there drifted across her mind anything related to the reasons of her rashness in setting off upon the back of this wallowing delirious beast, turned from it in weak loathing, as from an odor of stale lilies, and wondered at herself.

On the fourth day at sea, she woke with sensations of a more negative kind than theretofore; the sight of the marbled deep rising at regular intervals to the top of her port-hole, and dropping away with the same inexorable

unhurried speed, did not produce on her the mental effect of a reasoned cruelty. The mysterious horror attached to seeing her cloak swing free of the wall and hang out into the middle of the stateroom did not force her to keep her eyes shut. She turned an absolute indifference upon the antics of her suspended clothing; she found pleasure in the cold sunny look on the face of the sea.

The air, when it flowed down to meet her later on the hobnailed steps of the companion-way, revived her like a long sparkling drink. Coming fully out into the world of swirling, rushing sound, she pushed up her face to the tonic cold, breathed deep, and felt made over new. She looked on the sea, whose true character she had vowed to report on land more exactly than had yet been done, with a soft feeble-minded gratitude to it that at last its bitter malignity toward herself was spent. She lay in her steamer-chair, almost obliterated by wraps, conscious of a luxury in mere existence.

Her mind was at rest about the past, now; the past seemed part of the shore left behind. It did not project itself very vividly, either, into the future actually awaiting her on the shore the ship was nearing; it enjoyed a cradled, transitional period, without sense of responsibility to itself; with license to weave pretty romantic pictures, the like of which, in properly conscious moments on land, she had questioned and quarreled with, and subjected to the rules of common sense, till they melted discouraged under the brutal test.

Shortly after landing, Nelly casually signified her intention of sending the maid they had brought with them back by the returning steamer.

"Bella?" asked Murrie, blankly; "send Bella home? My dearest child, what do you mean? What is the matter with her? What has she done?"

"I see," said Nelly, turning from the hotel window whence with deeply interested eyes she had been watching the foreign street,

"that you have not the faintest conception of what we are about to start in for. Oh, my poor Murrie! — There, you are beginning to have the appropriate expression, the startled, coming-to look of Pauline, the Lady of Lyons. Well, you may, you deluded dear! Here in Bremen, it is nothing. Here we merely dispense with the services of Bella, and send her home. Though we button our own boots, we still have a suite on the first floor, and ever so many courses for dinner. But in Dresden! There we are going to live like two sober straitened students, in two little bedrooms and a sitting-room, no better than you were accustomed to of old, Murrie, when you were such a student in reality; you've unwarily told me all about it. And no one comes to see us more exciting than a music-master; and when we want amusement, we go out for a simple Spaziergang; or if we feel that we have earned it, we take our knitting to the opera-house, and sit in the German for nigger's-heaven — "

"I suppose, dear, that I shall in time be in possession of your whole meaning. Meanwhile, let me enough into the secret to join you in laughing. What are you doing?"

"I am putting away my rings. The act is a symbol, Murrie. No one must see me in a turquoise the size of a robin's egg."

"You are quite right, dear. They think differently here of the taste of wearing such articles, — for a person of your age, I mean. I meant to speak to you about it."

"I have not their ideas of taste in the least on my heart. But stones like these and a lady's maid of Bella's style seem to give the key of one's scale of prices, and at once the circumstances arising around one fall into proportion with them. And I want to appear poor and modest, Murrie, to the point that nothing will offer to divert me from my dedication of myself to the study of an art — by which of course I am hoping later to earn an honest living, not so likely in the concert field, which Paderewsky rather crowds, as in

some little Western field, some conservatory for the deaf. Don't look so mystified, Murrie! When it is all over, what a time I will give you! Like 'Curlylocks, Curlylocks, will you be mine?' But until I say 'Time up!' don't tell which Nelly Brown I am, Murrie. Let me be just one of the hard-working, little-spending, unnoticed tribe of Nelly Browns scattered all over the world."

"Hard-working, you! Little-spending! Here, let me sit down."

"Don't faint, Pauline. Is it such a crazy, unnatural whim? Why shouldn't Curlylocks have grown sick, in twenty years, of strawberries, sugar, and cream, and wanted to try a common diet? Why don't you say to yourself, you stupid Murrie, 'This notion of Nelly's won't last long enough to make any real difference,' and lend yourself to it gracefully, pretending you find it amusing? That is what I was counting upon from you, Murrie. That, in fact, is why I brought you!"

"And that is what I was really just about

to say, my dear," said Murrie, only a little lamely, only a little behind time. "I should like it of all things. Heaven knows that a quiet time is what I at heart prefer. Really, Nelly, in pleasing yourself in this matter, you will be more than pleasing me. I shall enjoy of all things a spell of true quiet. I can start a couple of those lifelong pieces of German embroidery, one for Emma and one for Adela. And I should dearly like to take up some special study myself, which is a thing one never has time for at home: the study, for instance, of Goethe, his philosophy as gathered from his entire work. That is what my aunt, Mrs. Simons, did, and found it a great help. But that, of course, I would do only at odd moments, when I could be of no use to you in your music, dear, or as interpreter between you and your teachers."

"You precious old Murrie! — I am not laughing at you, no! Don't for a moment think it! You don't mind my laughing, dear? It is only the delicious tableau we

make: you poring over Goethe, with your feet in hot water, and me pegging away at Ollendorff, with a wet towel around my head, and the clock telling one! Oh, it is too touching! Why I laugh is so as not to cry! — Oh, Murrie, my poor Ma humming Baby Jones to sleep! Oh, my poor Pa in Cloverfield! Is there any such place any more upon the earth as Cloverfield? Oh, I mustn't! — Do you think we could find the old rooms you had? Wouldn't it be rather fun? Things don't change here in a quarter of a century as they do with us — at least, that is what every one is always saying!"

"Not things, dear, but people I am afraid do. It does not seem likely that Frau Schuller — Frau Ottilie, we used to call her — still lets rooms, and the same ones. Still, of course, she might; or some one else might let the same ones. She must be quite old now. She had recently become a widow when I knew her, and had the future of a

daughter very much on her heart. Pita, how well I remember her!"

"Is Peter a girl's name here?"

"I believe it's the short for Josephine. It does seem funny, come to think of it; but no funnier really than Polly for Mary in English. Dear me! How I should like to drop in on them, and see if I am so changed they would not recognize me. It's rather grewsome, though, hunting up old friends; it would be so horrid to be told on reaching the old door that they had all been dead for years. Or not to be able to find the place at all, everything being so changed. Dear me! I meant fully, when I left her, to correspond with dear Frau Ottilie the rest of my life, and cheer her by little Christmas and birthday remembrances. It would have been so easy and cost so little. Strange how those things come to an end, one doesn't know how. How little we are what we set out to be, child — how little we do what we intended!"

"Don't, Murrie! When I am so blue already I have all I can do to keep up! Where's your character for cheerfulness? We will not miss a single mail in writing home. We will send them a regular diary and photographs of everything, and pressed flowers and samples. Cheer up, Murrie dear! If your Ottilie had kept on writing to you, you would probably have written to her. It's a comfort that we are all so much alike — but isn't it ghastly that it should be a comfort! Oh, let's never, never forget any one again! Come, dear! We'll hunt up Ottilie, and induce her to forgive and take us in. She would be such a good one to direct us to the proper teachers and set us going right. We should have all the advantages of belonging in a good private family; but we must firmly dispense with all the disadvantages. You must explain to her, dear Murrie, how much we object to interference of any sort; and how much it is in our habits to do just as we please. Particularly in mine."

"That's lovely! If, with the disposition I remember in her, she could hear the sentiments dropping from your rosebud mouth, how she would rise up and do her mightiest to bring you to a sense of the becoming in a *jeune fille!* I do wonder which of the two there would be most left of at the end. Fortunately, it is really only the principle you would be at variance about. Your conduct will probably be much that of any amiable self-respecting girl. I think therefore I will not make her bristle unnecessarily with an exposition of your theoretical rule of conduct; the less if we are going unheralded, without maid, or rings, or any evidence of heavy backing in Cloverfield."

Which indeed, a few days later, was the fashion of their going.

"And this is the place where you used to live!" Nelly exclaimed, when the door had closed on the landlady. "And that was she!"

"Yes, my dear," said Murrie deprecat-

ingly; "I am very much afraid that I have brought you to the wrong place. I am quite sure you won't like it, and I shall feel responsible. I remembered it so different, though I confess that the things look extraordinarily like the same things: that tablecloth may be another, but it might just as well be the old one, for any difference. The very wall-pattern comes back to me! Dear me! a green stripe and a white, a green and a white, and the little sentimental flowers. I remember counting them when I was in bed, with a cold, I guess. I have been carrying it all in my mind as cheerfuller, larger. It does look bare and chilly and like poor students, with a vengeance. The change, I suppose, is in myself; the cheerfulness I remembered was my own."

"I like it!" said Nelly, against expectation; she looked about her with the solemn eyes of a cat in a new garret.

"Well, it is clean! And I could see that old Frau Ottilie would be glad to have us.

I gathered that she finds difficulty in letting her rooms. She has not been prospering, poor lady. I can sympathize. Her Pita has not married, as she had naturally hoped she would."

"I couldn't understand much of your conversation, even when for my sake you spoke French. Is her French very bad, Murrie, or is it mine? But I thought it rather hard on the old Fräulein to bemoan right before her that she had not been able to get a husband. She looks such a meek, good, homely dear. Perhaps any daughter of her mother's would be meek."

"She is really enormously well informed. They, no doubt, would be very grateful if you engaged her to give you German lessons rather than some one from outside."

"I had just as soon. She shall teach me German; and I, over and above her terms, will teach her to do her hair, which would have been of more use to that frumpy angel fifteen years ago than ever German will be

to me. Oh, I shall like it here — when they get that stove going. How freezing cold it is! Where shall we put the piano? Where did it use to stand?"

"Here, in the light. I had long boxes of mignonette in the windows. It would be easy enough to have them again."

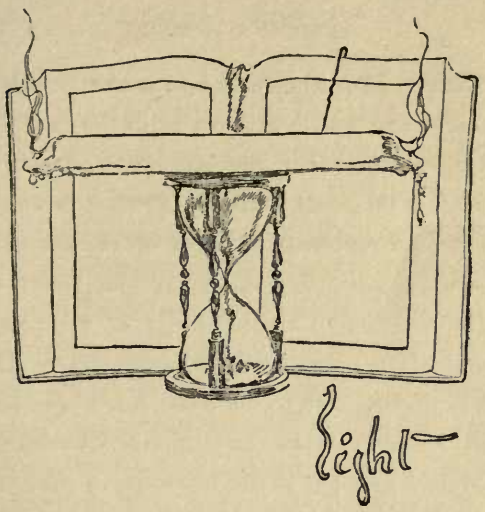
"Oh, Murrie, I am going to like it!"

"Are you, dear? I am delighted! I am astonished too; because it is so utterly different from anything you have ever known. I suppose the place has possibilities, like any place. We can make it look cosier by putting flowers everywhere, and throwing knick-knacks and photographs about, and heaping fat down cushions on the sofa — for pity's sake, feel this bolster! — and draping things on the wall — "

"It is going to remain exactly as it is, Murrie. Even to the tatting tidies made by Pita when she was little — even to the raveled wool lamp-mat. Here we will have a bookcase; here, the piano. Nothing further,

I swear! Not a flower! Not a stuffed bird! Your own bedroom you can fix to suit yourself: you can convert it into a nest of luxury, as far as a barelegged iron bedstead permits. I will take refuge in it with you when I get homesick. Now we must cast about for a piano-teacher: preferably a man, because I know myself, I shall do better, I shall have more pride about it; and some nice English-speaking person to read with me, preferably a woman — there is something so confidential about exposing the whole extent of one's ignorance. Oh, Murrie, I am going to love this queer little poverty-stricken place — I think! You dear Murrie, it is good of you to come with me here, and do everything I want. You are good to me, Murrie; and I always so consistently a pig to you — don't think I don't know it. But you shouldn't stand it!" Nelly caught Murrie, and rubbed her own cheek endearingly against the older cheek, letting escape, in an irrelevant impulse, sighed words that were half lost down Mur-

rie's collar: "I want to be nice! I want to be clever! And sweet! And not selfish! If there are such beautiful things that every one raves about them, I want to see them too. I too want to see that they are beautiful!"



THE bookcase came filled with volumes that Nelly had a childish liking for ordering and reordering on the shelves, opening them to smell the new paper. Frau Ottilie took the trouble to announce in person one day an extraordinary package from the bookseller's. She left the door open behind her for the grunting man and maid who were bringing it; and remained, without pretending that she had come for anything else, to see it opened. It contained a universal history purchased by

Nelly. Her scheme was to learn the whole story once for all, and not be in the dark any longer concerning any allusion. She began reading this work early on the next morning, but soon reversed the order of the chapters, and was satisfied that she got on better so. She also bought another universal history, in a single volume, with pictures; and, to bear a similar relation to her handsome Shakespere in thirteen volumes, an attractive Charles and Mary Lamb key to the mysteries of the plots.

The piano came, the lustrous rosewood grand, that half filled the room, and made it elegant; a middle-aged professor followed, who adjusted Nelly's hands upon it, and patiently drilled them to make music. An elderly Englishwoman appeared punctually in the early day, who supported and pushed Nelly up the steep path of learning, pointing out to her the encouraging flowers by the way, and bidding her periodically turn to admire the broadening view. And Fräulein Pita served her with alternate French and

German. Having resolved to address each other in none but foreign tongues, Murrie and Nelly were mostly hoarse with laughing.

Pita had not been there many times when Murrie, lingering at the work-table at the end of a lesson, heard Nelly's voice in the adjoining bedroom, high and loud in her anxiety to make her meaning penetrate: "There, Pita! That is the way! You shouldn't it all down-spatten. Auf-fluffen, auf-fluffen must you it! And every night good brushen — brushen! And on little kid devils locken — locken! And every two or three weeks good washen! Then it will look recht schoen. Verstehen? Nice, handsome Pita! Look at yourself in the Spiegel, and see how *lovely* you look!"

"Ach, Nelly!" came in the other voice.

"But that's not all! You must make your mother have you big sleeves made, great big sleeves like this! Gross! Ungeheuer! And you must have two — or I guess three would be better — of your skirts put into one. It's not the material, it's the shape of a thing

that matters! Look at me! This dress of mine is not worth a penny more than yours. It's simple — as anything! But if my dressmaker woman didn't make it the right shape at first, I would sit upon her until she did! And so ought you to do! What a *pity* I can't make you understand! Here, Murrie, come in here, dear, and just see what a different thing Miss Pita looks. And tell her word for word what I say — "

Pita's mother not unfrequently mounted the steep stairs, and on the latter half of her commanding rat-tat appeared in the doorway. Murrie looked up, always amiable and disarming; work in hand, she half rose, dropping her scissors and silks. Nelly tried to look pleasant toward one taking for the moment in some sort the character of guest to her, but a slight frown went side by side with her smile. It seemed to her extraordinary that the Frau Landlady could not let them *be*.

Frau Ottilie had had so many students in her house that she knew just what was good

for them; and their good she regularly attended to, even though only paid for lodging and board. She watched the ways and progress of each inmate of her house, and freely interposed her unauthorized authority, endured, no one knew why, but that her face was benevolent as well as stern, and sad enough to protect her ways, however preposterous, from ridicule. Besides, her advice was good.

"My child, what is that you play?" she came in one morning to say. "The nervous way you have of practicing makes me ready to cry out in my room below with communicated nervous discomfort. Your tempos are the most extraordinary! Of time you have no idea. Here I have brought up to you the metronome. This I will set in motion for you. Melodie in F. Good. *Moderato.* So. Tik-tak! Tik-tak! Now you keep that going, my child. I shall be able to tell at once if you stop it. As for the signs of *rallentando* and *accelerando*, you play not well

enough to have it of any consequence whether you regard them."

"Murrie," sighed Nelly, when Frau Ottilie had retired, "will you tell that old woman to mind her own business!"

In the midst of her practicing, not many days after, Frau Ottilie came up again, holding something behind her, as she might have held a rod. "How much is it you tell your master that you practice in the day?"

Nelly ruffled her forehead in half-amused exasperation. "Why? To whom does it matter anything? Three hours, I guess — half an hour at a time."

"So I thought. I always look at the clock when you begin. But you always stop five or six minutes short of your half, beside getting up from your piano-stool and walking to the window a dozen times. I can hear your feet. With this absence of conscience will you do nothing. Here I have brought up to you the half-hour sand-glass. This you turn upside down. So.

And you practice without stopping till all the sand is run out."

"Murrie!" screamed Nelly, but not before Frau Ottilie's slow step had died down the house. "Will you tell that old busybody to stay at home? I believe," she added softly, "that it will become my painful business to check her!"

Again, one afternoon when Murrie and Nelly had settled themselves chillily beside the great stove, Frau Ottilie came in with a mighty "*Ei was?*" and laid her commands on them to go for a walk, enlarging candidly to Nelly on the reason of her not being a lovely color like a German or English girl, but *so bleich, so bleich!*

The languid creatures laughed to find themselves in the street.

"A person would have to spread out her feet, and brace herself like a mule!" said Nelly; "it really ought to be done by somebody. I always think I am going to be the one to do it, just for the glory of Cloverfield.

But if I were, don't you see, I should have to stick to the course she opposed, and she makes it so uncomfortable by the ghastly doubts she raises in your mind. Murrie, tell me the truth: doesn't she exaggerate a little when she says I am *so bleich?* Am I a fine saffron, as she intimates? I can see myself in the glass, and it doesn't seem really as bad as she says. But one never knows how one may strike another! We really must go for a little tramp every day. Ethel always told me I ought to. The air is good after that stove! Let's walk briskly, to keep warm. We will become great pedestrians, Murrie. — But," she added, pensively looking down, "I will never wear sensible boots."

When next Nelly was compelled to suffer Frau Ottilie's frankness, the ponderous lady's strictures found her in a different mood. Nelly had reached the point in her progress where her figurative first wind was exhausting. The novelty was worn off her adventure: she stood bewildered before the difficulties be-

setting her, the immensity of the field to be traversed before one acquired the faintest characteristics of a traveler therein. On this day it seemed to her that her friends in America *might* have troubled themselves a little more about her; home letters were unfrequent and unsatisfactory.

While she sat with aching shoulders, scientifically exercising her five fingers, in the darkling nether stratum of her mind she pondered giving up this whole mistaken weary scheme of grubbing, and going back to be a butterfly. Frau Ottilie came in at this juncture with an insignificant object; something she had casually spoken of, saying, "You shall see it some time," and taking herself literally, had now toiled up the stairs with, as if her promise had been made to a child. Nelly, with the under-feeling that in a few days she should have resumed her talismanic blue ring, had down her great trunk, and unfolded broad golden wings, leaving this old house to continue sordid and sad without her — a feeling,

too, that it was somehow pathetic that a woman of great age should value so highly a trifle such as she was showing them — exaggerated a little her note of admiration of the paltry treasure, and of Frau Ottilie's kindness in bringing it to them. While she was speaking, Frau Ottilie watched her in curious silence.

"My child," she said, when Nelly stopped, "do say that again!"

"Say what?" asked Nelly, puzzled.

"What you were just saying. Or anything else. Talk. I want to watch your face in the meanwhile. It is extraordinary!"

Nelly, with an impulse of ill-humor, turned on her heel, and walking to the window, looked frigidly down at the people passing.

Frau Ottilie followed her quite simply, and putting out an unscared finger, turned the girl's face toward her own. Nelly's teeth shut. She thought the time had come to say something properly rude. It apparently had

not. The strong light was cruel to Frau Ottilie's peering old face; the black of her clothes looked green. Nelly tilted her little head backwards, a proud resignation on her eyelids.

Frau Ottilie ran her fingers across the girl's white forehead, smoothing it out. "What is it makes you talk with your whole face, my child?" she said, not unkindly. "You will have lines all over it long before you begin to be old." Nelly's hand jumped to her temple. "If you knew the wearisome effect it has, beside! Repose you must cultivate in your features; it is so beautiful, so much a part of dignity. You Americans are so conscious, that is your chief defect. Never have I seen an American who was pretty, whose face did not tell you at once she thought herself even prettier than she appeared to you. But you will not be pretty long, my dear, if you misuse your face like that. Nothing is so disagreeable as tricks such as yours when the lines made by them deepen and settle. You

will in time merely appear to be troubled with a *tic nerveux*."

"Let me go, please," said Nelly, a small break in her voice; and shaking off Frau Ottilie's hand, she left the room, and closed her bedroom door.

She went to the greenish mirror on the chest of drawers, and standing uncertainly before it, watched two unexplainable tears form in her eyes and be drunk back. In want of anything to do in that room, she dropped into a chair and fixed her glance upon her reflection, with a superficial supposition that she was waiting for the dragon in the next room to have the grace to leave. Criticism had found her that day in no mood for it, that was all, she said to herself. She cared very little what Frau Ottilie thought of her looks. She examined her face, nevertheless, with the natural interest derived from a new point of view. She did not look pretty at that moment, it was sure; because she was extremely tired and savagely cross. She tried to look pretty to

command: she took the attitude she judged necessary, she arranged her features. But admire herself she could not. She smiled; her smile, in the disagreeable side-light, was not helped by the moist radiant pearly patch her teeth made in a more favoring light: it had an effect of mere muscular contortion. She pushed up her eyebrows experimentally, and saw the crowded lines on her forehead that Frau Ottilie said would by and by never leave it. Mechanically she began rubbing them out. She suddenly dashed her face perilously near the glass, to look for crow's-feet. She breathed again! No trace of them when her face was still. She sat down in relief, with an ear perfunctorily alert for sounds in the sitting-room of Frau Ottilie leaving it. Before she could govern them, tears had come into her eyes again; this time she allowed them to form fully, and with heaving chest watched them fall. She had put Frau Ottilie's remarks below her consideration; but thoughts of her own bred by them pressed on her heart

like wreathed thorns: the sadness, the pitifulness of it! that it should be only a question of time, and whether or not she cultivated the repose of feature commended by Ottilie, she would come to wrinkles and gray hairs like her — not be pretty any more! What is sure to happen in this world of relentless conditions, is it not almost as if already it had happened? Not pretty! When it seemed the one thing a person had to be really thankful for! And those who loved one could not in reason love one any more for that, could not be proud of one for it! Oh, then — other tears here overran, unchecked, abundant, hot — surely it behooved one to acquire some little imperishable grace of mind, invent some golden manner of being of the heart, with which still in the gray hour of beauty's waning, to reward the fidelity of a love found faithful, to delight and charm still a love that had deserved well —

Ah, not in exalting the thought of any substitute for it, to underrate the good gift,

beauty! This one must by every earthly precaution make as lasting as nature allows — cease, for one thing, to frown and raise one's eyebrows! Perhaps it could be kept at some semblance, however attenuated, of bloom, till the eyes one wished eternally to enthrall were grown dim —

But perhaps — the suspicion arose not for the first time, but was for the first time looked in the eyes — even while beauty lasted, its effect upon the mind of its most passionate votary lessened with custom. A copy-book commonplace, alas, that the power of beauty has the shortest lease! Self-evident, that a grace whose spell lies so greatly in its element of freshness to the sense, must dwindle to less than half of its worth with habit. Oh, then, the little hoard of supreme expedients might be called into requisition in youth even: when the devoted eye was grown unimpressible to the repeated round of smiles and dimples and glances, the devoted soul perhaps would be open still to sweet impressions

from daily amenities of goodness, to surprises of light cast from the changing facets of a polished mind —

Nelly, sitting before her mirror, losing sight of her face as it grew more rapt, reached a mood in which things looked unusual to her, altered in their proportions: familiar ideas she had held important grown insignificant, and other new half-formed ones looming large. She rose in a sort of fear of these crowding upon her, and to restore herself by some common act to a normal sense of her state, bathed her face for full ten minutes; hailing gratefully at last the characteristic thought that she was taking timely measures against the threatened lines.

With a face like a serious mask, wearing an expression rather noble for a working-day, she went back to the sitting-room; but found she was not to brave the presence of Frau Ottilie, not to have heard whom retire denoted an abstraction more complete than she had known. Her expression lost a shade of

its nobility. She sat down at the piano, and began to play such pieces as she knew well enough to play without her music; listening to herself, forcing the expression a little toward sentiment, wondering whether her playing heard in the twilight could give pleasure, and unclose to the listener who leaned with his elbow on the instrument, watching her in the violet shade, the delicate dream-world of which music had sometimes lately given her a hint. Her playing by degrees grew less unlike that of a street-organ; while she tried to imagine at a quiet fireside, many years old, a dying conversation that reacquired freshness and a tender *Gemüthlichkeit* from the deft introduction into it, as a topic, of the royal interests of Rome. Nelly's lips formed silently, with a luxurious consciousness of grasp on them, seven harmonious names of hills, and the dates of various battles, and in their order twelve splendid imperial names, while a jumbled train of pictures passed through the illumined darkness of her

gold-dusted head: gladiators, long-robed Christians, battering towers, sibylline leaves, sacred geese, a bleeding woman murmuring down history to the end of the world, "It does not hurt!"

Murrie, as the year wore on, accepted for a melancholy certainty that Nelly would not weary of her fad; and watched her with covert wonder at the obstinacy with which she plodded on, hopeful regularly at morning, discouraged at evening — until one day the girl announced her discovery of a special application of mental force by which she seemed to gain control over the flighty motions of her brain, and was enabled to center her thoughts on what she chose. After that, the strides she made in every study astonished her friend.

They became indefatigable haunters of picture-galleries, insatiable opera-goers. Nelly asked naïvely of this one and that, "What is the most *beautiful* thing you ever read?" and having procured the book, tore the heart

out of it, eager to feel every pulsation it had to give; not testing it by any personal taste, but swallowing with devoted indiscrimination; straining to transplant its beauties bodily into her own little garden-plot, adorning her mind with stirring graceful facts as with the finest paper roses.

One night, the task she had set herself was so generous, it kept her at work until so late, that, weariness forcing her to go more and more slowly, it appeared likely to take her foolishly near to daybreak. She scorned to stop short of what she had marked off. She read on, one by one taking the shell pins out of her hair, to ease her head; tracking every word she did not know, and scribbling it in English over the German; declining, conjugating, faithfully making sense. At one point all grew so difficult to grasp that she turned her eyes from the blurring type, and looked about the room in an effort to clear her brain. She saw the shelves full of books: the thought came to her, with its full

attendance of discouragement, how hard she had read at them, and how little impression made on their total arrayed heap. And how little impression that little had made on herself, proportionately! It was like attempting the mountain of glass of the fairy-tale, this learning; the circumstance of each new fact grasped pushing an old one out of memory was justly typified by the climber slipping back at every step. She leaned her head, which was beginning to ache, upon one arm; after a little disheartened rest, she raised it again, determining to be great-souled at least about this thing: hers, after all, must be the common experience, her cranium was not constituted on a different plan from most others. Something must remain of all that one forgot; some fine essence of the beauty one's mind had dwelt upon must cling to it, subtly qualifying it, making it a degree more like what it had had the grace to love. So much at least is to be hoped, or the learner's, truly, is a desperate case.

She proceeded with her construing of "The Sorrows of Young Werther," her music-master's recommended favorite, till with the wearing on of the hour a disagreeable consciousness became attached to the yawning black square made behind her by the door through which was heard Murrie's peaceful breathing. She looked over her shoulder, vaguely fearful of seeing something take form in the darkness — till the dilation of her pupils became painful, and she lingeringly withdrew her eyes. At this hour of deathly stillness, in the light shed through the green paper of the lamp-shade, the place took on a dreamlike strangeness. She hesitated helplessly before the uncertainty of what sensation her nerves might give her if taxed with further fatigue. A light of inspiration lifted her features suddenly to an amused childish brightness. After a sidelong glance at Murrie's door, she cautiously tiptoed into the darkness of her own bedroom; whence she came back with an increased slyness of tread, an

indescribable smile blossoming broadly on the desert air, and a turbanlike arrangement of linen folds on her head.

She seated herself with a refreshed sigh; and feeling that, this measure taken, she could with ease work on indefinitely, she leaned back, instead of proceeding at once with her task, to indulge in a little meditation suggested by the feeling of the delightful coolness on her head. At this hour, no doubt, in various parts of Germany, others were working under similar conditions, in poor chambers, by a solitary lamp, a wet cloth binding their temples. Her imagination, soon particularizing, settled down about one of these students, whose thoughts, when he lifted his eyes a moment to rest them, went wandering to lighted scenes of gayety at the other side of the world, to follow the gayest of the figures there. With an impulse of hurry, Nelly returned to her book, as if each step toward its end had brought her nearer as well to some other, less obvious,

but surely better cherished end; as if this unsuspected companionship in labor must occultly effect an alleviation to the fatigue of the visioned student, like secret sharing of a burden.

Simultaneously with the perusal of the love-story to which Nelly now applied herself, was conducted in her mind a pretty rehearsal of personal theories of love, airy and bold and comprehensive, in the security of no need to state them aloud. In and out among the lines showing forth the great author's thoughts, glanced and blossomed, twittered and wound Nelly's own.

"But this will never do!" she said, recognizing that she was making little progress with Werther. She may have thought thereupon that because she set to gnawing her pencil she had plunged ear-deep into study: in reality, she had not been able to stay herself on the slippery inclined plane of thinking of love. With face bent low, and eyes half closed, she was but a moment later

holding her breath to call back the sense of a face bearing down upon her somewhat inexorably, with a blue glance that grew larger and deeper, bluer and more compelling, till nothing was seen or known beside it; the sense of a passionate hurried breathing on her lips, that in memory had still the power to stir her deepest being. A curious fine little ache bored blindly through all her veins; she wished with a great useless choking throb that time had not needed to be lived through hour by hour, minute by minute —

"But if," said the cold voice that at the climax of heated occasions spoke in Nelly's mind with such a definite enunciation, "if one were to find herself in the most ordinary way forgotten?"

With proud instantaneousness, a totally different set of mental activities than those fermenting in the excited small hours, responded in a tone that matched the first for its common practical quality, "It would not in the very least matter! Because in that

case there would have been nothing worth caring about!"

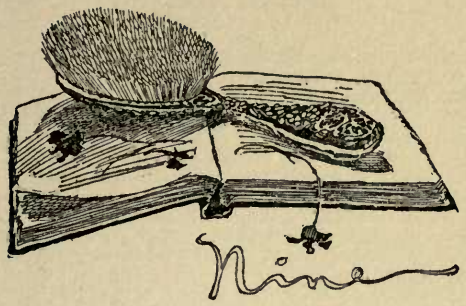
Nelly fell to working in hurried earnest now, to be done and go to bed. She questioned her judgment for persisting with the disproportionate task, but felt a superstitious dislike to breaking an engagement with herself because the mood was past in which it had been made.

"Thou young she ass!" she heard spoken softly behind her, in tones that breathed scorn to the point of ecstasy. Turning with a crazy jump, she saw Frau Ottilie in her bedgown and nightcap. Nelly's face, under the great Cenci head-dress, looked small and pale as a Pierrot's; her damp side-locks hung straight along her cheeks; her eyes were great and solemn far in excess of the occasion.

"Thou young she ass!" repeated Frau Ottilie, in a voice that dropped to a fat low note, and seemed to revel in the epithet. Then, quite changing tone, "Now thou packest instantly to bed!" she said. "Hearest

thou? And we hear no more of this nonsense. That Marri — I know her sufficiently well of old days — is just such another *Eselin* as thyself, and lets thee do thy ridiculous will in all things. But I will not permit thee to make thyself ill in my house, hearest thou? And thy mother not here to care for thee. Hereafter thou art in thy bed at ten or the very latest eleven, hearest thou? Never have I seen an object to equal thee at this moment, never, my child, in the years of my life! It were well thou couldst see thyself in a mirror, even as thou appearest to me. Thou wouldst never forget it. Come, come, bestir thyself! To bed! To bed! See, now: this little end of candle I leave with thee, which will last thee long enough to obey me; and the lamp I carry away."

Though she continued overt and candid in her correction of Nelly, Frau Ottilie was overheard not long after exclaiming to a table-neighbor, in reference to the little American, "*Ist Sie nicht nett!*"



THE days, very full and nearly alike, passed quickly. Summer was, to Nelly's thinking, all too soon upon them.

They departed for a change and rest into the Tyrolese mountains.

They spent days of pastoral sweetness out under the trees, over the valley; consciously drinking in health with the fir-scented air; Nelly reading what she called serious books, Murrie sewing and "catching up with her correspondence."

The last weeks dragged to one of them; Nelly was very glad when the time came to return to Dresden.

She established herself once more with her

masters, feeling equal to whatsoever exertion. She had fallen into an unrelenting jogging pace that promised to bring her out by summer-time at the other side of the tangle of many a branch of learning, when all her rules must be broken one day on Murrie's account, who came in from the street with the glowing exclamations: —

"Guess who is in Dresden! Guess whom I met not three blocks from here! The Lighters, my dear! Florence and her sister, Mrs. Potter, and her brother-in-law, and Percy, and the little fellow. They've been abroad for months. They've been traveling all over Germany. My dear, I was never so glad to see any one in my life! We fell on one another's necks. They would have come at once to see you, but were prevented by some engagement. I told them we would go to their hotel right after lunch."

"My dear — and Herr Liebmann?" said Nelly, faintly.

"Oh, come! Don't tell me you are going to let an old music-lesson stand in your way! You can leave word for him."

Nelly scarcely knew what she felt; but she did know it was not joy. She had a boding sense that something would be ended with her life touching anew that of these old associates. The mere sound of their names, taking her back, seemed to nullify in some vague respect this last year, to take from its unity, to complicate and confuse her sentiments.

She wished, brutally, that they had stayed away.

After a pensive pause, during which Murrie stood wondering at her, she rose to the necessities of the case. Then, gradually, she warmed and was excited.

She looked over her last year's dresses, to find the one that was the least out of style; for Dresden it still did very well, she thought. She resumed her splendid rings; she sent out for violets; and made herself as like as she

could to the Nelly Brown known of the Lighters.

At sight of Florence her feelings gave a hearty up-bound. The two old boarding-school friends fell into each other's arms and laughed.

Undressing before the mirror that night, Nelly seemed to herself another person than the one who had dressed before it. She had been as if inoculated with pleasure; she was feverish to be gay and amused, to be with the Lighters, and just like them.

On the dressing-table lay an open book from which she had been learning a passage that morning while she brushed her hair, when nothing was further from her thoughts than the Lighters. So much more than a day seemed to separate her from it. She tried vainly to recall the conned passage. Something had indefinably qualified the whole year past. Her self of the last year had to her own mind a dreamlike effect that discomforted her a little. There was some-

thing so real about the Lighters: her ears were full of their strenuous voices; the voices of the past were become ghostlike beside them.

She read over the scrap of verse, as if thereby she caught at something stable. She committed poetry to memory because she liked to repeat it to herself while she played the piano. She read the lines over and over now, persistently, until she had brought her mind to a frame in which it could receive their meaning.

"I think," she said, when her eyes fell on the plain work-gown she had left across the chair, "I think I will send word very early that I can't come till I have attended to all my lessons as usual."

At that moment Murrie entered the room in the act of twisting a forelock on a crimping-pin.

"Nelly," she said, in her meandering conversational bedtime tone, "weren't you a little surprised at what we heard about Jack Holmes?"

"Jack Holmes?—Who is Jack Holmes?"

"Jack Holmes? Why, John! Your Holmes, my dear! From Cloverfield. The one who used to come and see you. Ethel's brother."

"Oh!"

"Didn't you know before that he was a classmate of Percy's?"

"No."

"I didn't, either. But I should have if I had stopped to think. They were both '94 men. I guess it was while you and Florence were off somewhere out of the room that we were talking about him. They have all just been in Vienna, you knew that."

"Yes."

"They liked it so well they're going back. There are lots of nice Americans there this winter. They had a tremendously good time. For the matter of that, I've come to the conclusion that it's easy enough to have a good time anywhere if you have a lot of money. I should think you would like to take a holiday, and go on with them for a

few weeks. Mrs. Potter said she wished you would. Florence seemed so happy to have you with her; and Percy said he wished you would. I guess they'll tease you to go. My dear, aren't American men the nicest fellows in the world? I declare, they make me feel patriotic. I do hope you will go. It would do you no end of good."

"In what way? I am not in the slightest need of having good done to me," said Nelly, coldly.

"Oh, I know. They were all saying how much stronger you look. But I warn you, I am going to make it very easy for you to go, if you feel the slightest natural sneaking young wish to be off and have a good time. You needn't be consistent, Nelly, and you needn't be persevering out of any pride before me. You taught me long ago to scorn those virtues and adore their opposites. You are tired, I know, dear. Good night again."

Nelly sat down on the edge of her bed and looked at the wall in front. The familiar

John-Hector she had been carrying in her brain, who reënacted ancient scenes, who moved with the motions of her volition, was suddenly painted on the outside air, independent of her, a figure of unknown quantity, against the improvised background of a city never seen.

Before she had stirred, "Oh," said Murrie, reappearing in the doorway, rubbing the space between her eyebrows with a rubber glove; "I didn't tell you what I set out to, did I? About Jack Holmes. That boy! He is quite a figure in Vienna, Percy says, among a certain set, students and Bohemians. Just as he was a great football figure at home, here he is — fancy what! You will never guess! A crack duelist. You know those silly duels the students are always fighting? It appears that he is simply amazing at them. I suppose it takes the place of athletics. I suppose the poor fellow needs exercise and excitement of some sort. But isn't it amusing that an American should excel at such a thing? It

is so foreign to all our institutions. I suppose he learned to fence at his gymnasium at home. Any duel is against the law, though; you know that; and when any one gets hurt, all involved have to scramble off over the roofs to escape arrest. It's awfully inconvenient. And sometimes when they fight, of course, there's a real grudge, though it wears more or less the face of a sport. Am I boring you, dear? It *is* rather late for a long story. I will make it short. Well, young Holmes fought quite a lot of duels because it apparently amused him to show them they couldn't walk over him, if he *wasn't* to the manner born. I guess he thought it fun to astonish them at their own game. Percy seems to admire him for it. As far as I am concerned, I confess I think he would have done better, under the circumstances, such as we know them, to give his whole attention to his work."

"You will make it a short story, won't you, Murrie? I am tired. I don't mean

leave out anything. But hurry along and don't give me the foot-notes."

"All right, dear. The final point is that he is at this moment in a sort of public hiding. The police isn't at all thorough, you know, in following up that sort of lawbreaker, any more than at home, I've heard them say, when there's a prize-fight. You're all right if you don't go about too openly, and are not to be found at home, for a while, till it has blown over. The ugly part in this case is that it was, as far as I can make out, in earnest, and the other man is likely to be on his back for some time. He was the one to blame, so it serves him right. He was the challenging party. He made it impossible for Holmes not to fight him, so Percy says. Why don't you ask me what it was all about, Nelly? I thought you would be so interested!"

"I am, of course. What was it about?"

"A woman, my dear! Doesn't the plot thicken? A beautiful lady with red hair.

Percy told us all about her. An artist, who is almost noble, or quite noble, I don't know which. I forget whether there was a *von* in her name. It is Juliane Wildermuth, or Juliane von Wildermuth — but that point doesn't affect the story. They are an excellent old family, anyhow, in reduced circumstances, and the mother lets part of her house, and one of the daughters paints portraits and things professionally. And Jack Holmes had lodgings with them. And so it happened that the other man grew jealous, and picked a quarrel with him. His jealousy was all nonsense, very likely — and yet in those matters one can't always tell. She is a great deal older than Jack, ten or fifteen years at least, but of course that in reality never makes the slightest difference in the world. And she is such an interesting creature, a regular enchantress, Percy says. He has seen her. Every one in Vienna knows her by sight and reputation; people tell one another the last fantastic thing she did or

said. As far as J. H. is concerned, I dare say all there is to it is that she thought he had a picturesque head, and as he was conveniently at hand painted his portrait — in character, I think Percy said. It was exhibited, and stirred the wrath of a cast-off adorer, who sought out Cloverfield John and was impudent to him. And now perhaps he wishes, done up in bloody bandages, that he had thought twice about it. I was awfully interested. I fairly pumped Percy — you know how it is when you are away from home about people you know even slightly — and tried to find out whether he himself thought John Holmes — Jack, as he calls him — was in love with the great Juliane — that was his expression. He said, 'Oh, you know about Jack! You know you can never tell anything about him.' But the two, owing to the attention everything she does attracts, and now this duel, have got themselves very much talked about. And she seems entirely careless of it. She is rather

grand, as Percy describes her, and does very much as she pleases, and laughs at what will be said, and keeps a tolerably clear name in spite of all. One can't help rather admiring her — I am just quoting Percy, you know. I don't think I admire her much myself. Personally, I am as fond as can be of unquestionable, cold, starlit respectability; and according to our notions she certainly deflects a little. That is to say, the ideal lady couldn't bear to put herself in a dubious light, any more than Cæsar's wife. Think, for instance, how Ethel would look upon it."

"Darling New-England Ethel!" murmured Nelly. "Is there any more to your story?" She stretched and yawned. "Your young man interests me very mediocrely, as that Paris-American painter-girl would say. There is nothing more to it, is there? Then good night, dear."

"Good night, sweetheart. I am glad, though, that you took no notice of his letters."

For a moment it appeared Nelly had not heard. Presently, she said, "What letters, Murrie?"

"Why, he wrote you twice a week for a while, didn't he, at first?"

"Did he? What a memory you have got! and what *flair*, as again that painter-girl would say." Nelly got up and poured herself a glass of water. "I am glad I have never tried to have a secret from you!" she said, in the air, before drinking; and after setting down the glass, querulously, "I wish I hadn't taken that coffee!"

"You took so little. That much can't keep you awake, can it?"

"I hope not. But I had better have something to take, in case it should. Put something sleepy where I can get it, won't you? I don't want to spend the night jumping sheep over a fence."

Nelly, on the instant of waking, groped in her mind for whatever it was had marked the evening before. She lay still a while,

and gazed at a spot on the ceiling. She heard a faint noise of cards shuffling in the next room. She knew that it was Murrie playing solitaire, as she did at any hour of the day that found her alone.

Nelly gave a dainty audible yawn. Murrie came in and kissed her with a cool face, and patted her with gratefully cool hands, and took her accustomed seat on the edge of the bed.

"You *have* slept!" she said.

"What time is it?"

"Near noon."

"Oh, and I was to have gone there at ten. What did you do with Percy? Didn't he come?"

"I sent him away, and said we would be over in the course of the day. You were sleeping so like a kitten, I couldn't bear to disturb you. I feared you must have been obliged to take a powder."

"Is it pleasant out?"

"Heavenly!"

"Murrie, let us dress ourselves gayly, and

sally lightly forth, as Fluffy says. Let us go into shops and spend a lot of money, and cable for more. Rubbing against Potters and Lighters has undermined all my principles. I have waked up world-without-end weary of being stingy and poky and drab-colored. I was fast getting to be a bookworm, wasn't I, Murrie? A musical Mamsell, a regular Träumerei girl! I was well started down the same path as Pita. When, Potters to the rescue! Let us be weeds! Let us be jolly ignoramuses! Let us be fat rich people! We will get a bushel of flowers for Frau Ottilie, and hothouse grapes, and take a box at the theatre, and have champagne. And let us buy ourselves some stunning clothes, and hire a carriage, and drive into the country, and present the house with a new oilcloth for the front entry, and Creschenz with a cap."

Murrie crushed Nelly to an enthusiastic breast. "There spoke my own Cloverfield Nelly!" she exclaimed. "*Let's!*"

Nelly, in dressing, paused with her arms in

the air. "How queer!" she exclaimed, and dropped her arms; then, after a moment, focused her whole intelligence upon adjusting the black-velvet bow in her hair.

She came into the sitting-room, looking, more than she had long done, like the Nelly of old days. Murrie, seeing her pick up the books in daily use, and order them in the bookcase, rose to help her. Nelly stacked the music in a scrupulously neat pile, and softly let down the piano-lid over the keys.

"I don't see," she said, looking about the room, ruffling her forehead, and at the same time with a mechanical gesture, become habitual with her, smoothing it out with the back of her hand, "I don't see how I have managed to be such a dull good girl for such a long time, do you, Murrie? Was it like me, I ask? I have been working almost a year and a half like a girl fitting herself to be a governess —"

"I know, dear. And it has not been wasted. I was telling Mrs. Potter what

wonders you have accomplished. I may as well tell you now, I did not for an instant dream that you would keep it up as you have done."

"How you were taken in, poor Murrie dear, in your pleasure-trip to Europe! Never mind, Pauline. We will make up for it!" and in sudden affectionate pity Nelly stooped to kiss her.

"Do you mean," asked Murrie, too staggered to keep the sneaking joy she felt out of her voice, "that you aren't going on with your studies?"

"Well, not to-day, nor yet to-morrow. It would be positively crass to sit down and work to-day. The contemplation of that happy Florence and Percy makes it seem such rubbish, — doesn't it? — to be a 'grind,' as the boys call it. I am going to take a rest on what little laurels I have already gathered."

"I see!" cried Murrie, as one upon whom dawned indeed a great light; and she seemed to be answering Nelly's face rather than her

words. "I knew you would! You have thought it over, and are going with them for a holiday. I am so glad! I may as well tell you now that it is just what I have been praying for!"

"Hold on, dear! Not so fast! You are mistaken. I don't know. I am not at all sure what I shall do. I am not sure of anything! I only know that lessons for to-day, or to-morrow, or the day after, are out of the question. Not Frau Ottilie herself with her hand on the thunder-valve could make me do one little *Aufsatz*. Florence and Percy make Frau Ottilie seem such a freak! I am going to be gay. I am going to follow my natural bent for a while. I feel so free, so free, so free!"

If Murrie was left by this a prey to contending hopes and fears, it was not for long: within the week Nelly had accepted the Potters' invitation to accompany them to Vienna for their supplementary visit, and after that to London. It seemed poetically fitting that she

should pass through Vienna, flashing like a meteor, furnishing Report with ample matter to trumpet, that Cloverfield John-Hector, hearing, should not peradventure harbor mistaken notions concerning a Nelly of the Fish-pond, a Nelly of the Garden, a Nelly Left Behind Him.

Her brief career in Vienna was not, however, what she had imagined and intended. It was not marked by the assurance, the splendor, the fine spirits. In going with the Potters to parties given in the Anglo-American colony, she had often to overcome an unfamiliar dread; always at the last minute she would have preferred staying away. Her measure of social success was of a very different sort from the old successes at home. It amounted to little more than this: that those who had seen her asked others whether they had seen her too. She was remembered as a sweetly pretty American, dressed like an angelic fashion-plate, whose face, touched when in repose with an interesting pensive-

ness, promised more than her conversation, wholly unserious and earthy, fulfilled.

She had no sooner reached Vienna than she would have liked to leave. She had not foreseen that any emotion would attach to walking streets in which it was so remotely possible that she should come face to face with John-Hector; or that having walked out, keyed to meet that contingency, emotion should attach to returning indoors without a chance to practice the appearance of gay indifference she had in store for it.

She could not but marvel at the impish unkindness of things which in common fairness, it seemed to her, should have remained neutral. A hat and coat in the distance would show unmistakably like John-Hector's, which coming nearer would turn into a ridiculous coat and hat, worn perhaps by an undersized shopkeeper, and have an effect of mocking as they passed, leaving her with a sense of cheapness and soilure. Then an umbrella, a mackintosh, and boots would do the same: they flashed to

her the impression that they were his before she could properly see them. What made this so objectionable was that every little shock of the kind was marked by a physical sensation of the least agreeable: like a twist of the screw to her heart, succeeded by a failure of force in the whole organ.

"There is a fate about it!" she said, when she found that she could not step out-of-doors without being startled by one of these ghostly adventures.

She applied the same phrase, which seldom fails to bring a sort of resignation, to the fact that never in her presence did Percy speak of John-Hector or of Juliane. It was not with intention, she knew, that he did not, that no one ever did: it happened! She was always expecting him to do it, wishing, yet fearing he might, and prepared to leave the room if he should. She never saw him without the reflection that perhaps he had just been with John-Hector, and neglected to mention it. Whenever, walking in com-

pany, they passed a red-haired woman, Nelly's heart put on its armor of readiness to hear, "That is Juliane Wildermuth." But it was never said.

When the time to depart from Vienna, so longed for at first, was at hand, Nelly had as lief have stayed. It mattered very little to her where she was, she told herself. Whereever she went her heartful of disgust must go too. She had reflected a great deal upon her state; indeed, had brooded over the thing that had happened to her without cessation, and had come to a sufficiently clear thought about it. She owned to it: she had idealized such a poor thing as a man; she had harbored an illusion, and lost it. She was discovering how strong those strange things are, what deep root they take. She must discover too how long it takes to recover from the loss of one. She thanked Heaven she was of a cold nature, and not one to persevere out of measure in the thought of a man who did not think of her. But for a time certainly she

must expect nothing but that her thoughts, which had traveled a given road for near two years, should still by habit, when the will was nodding, turn to it, as a thirsty flock might go down to the same place to drink after the spring had dried. She must find patience with the present in anticipating the view she would take later in life of the accident that had cut short a visionary relation with a good-for-nothing. She had been a fool; thereafter she would scarcely err in the same direction.

Meanwhile the point to which references to love, met in books, the theater, or conversation, could irritate and hurt, was at each helpless encounter with them a source of angry astonishment to her. It was nothing less than nauseating, this old, gray, disreputable, very knowing world, filled with every sort of sin and meanness, affecting to grow tender over a pot of forget-me-nots, over a white dove's feather! It was an indecency. For love, any above that of beasts in the field, was a gross lie, and all people over a

certain age must be in the secret. In a society so constituted there was nothing for it but not to care; and until she reached that state of callousness, she would assume the cheerfulness she hoped in time to feel. For with the passing of the faith that love is lasting, delight and dignity together had passed from all beautiful things, from poetry, music, nature, and human relations; and lightness of heart had apparently been involved with these.

One day, being in the street without Murrie, and passing a picture-dealer's, Nelly ordered the carriage to stop, went in, and asked if any paintings of Juliane Wildermuth's were on exhibition there.

There were not any. She was referred to Miss Wildermuth's studio, if she wished to see her latest work.

The day that was to be their last in Vienna arrived; they were to spend it on an excursion.

The carriages were at the door; the wraps

had been put into them, when Nelly, who was fastening her gloves, pulled them off, and sat down, saying to Murrie, "I don't want to go! I am not going! You must all go without me!"

Murrie ceased breathing, the better to look at her.

"Don't make a whole affair of it, dear, will you?" said Nelly, with a faintly formidable air, while she steadily returned her friend's look; "I simply don't want to go, or yet to explain, or yet to have you stay at home to see that I'm all right, or yet to have any one come and see what is the matter and whether sympathy is needed. What I want is to sit exactly where I am, and to have you go along and not keep them waiting, and say merely that at the last moment I didn't want to go. You needn't say I have a headache unless you particularly wish to. Can't I have a whim pure and simple once in a long while, and the luxury of indulging it? Thank Heaven," she gave forth with dark

intensity, "there's no law forces people to go to perpetual parties!"

"You are in need of a little rest," said Murrie, softly. "You have certainly been overdoing. I understand your feelings perfectly. They are natural, and you are quite right. It will do you much more good to have a quiet day before starting on that tiresome journey. Only, I am going to stay with you."

"Not for the world, Murrie! With all your kindness, you see, dear, you are making a situation, just as I was imploring you not to. If you would just go with the others, and let me do as I have a mind!"

"I will!" said Murrie, without more ado.

She wondered, as she left, whether she had witnessed a simple exhibition of nerves, or whether Nelly had a reason for not wishing to go. She thought it possible that Nelly should prefer not being thrown with the besieging Percy as the excursion would have thrown them, and fitting all that had come

under her observation to that conclusion, let her curiosity rest.

But Nelly had had no clear idea in doing what she did. The fact had struck her with sudden force that it was her last day in Vienna. She had dreaded putting the administration of it out of her own hands.

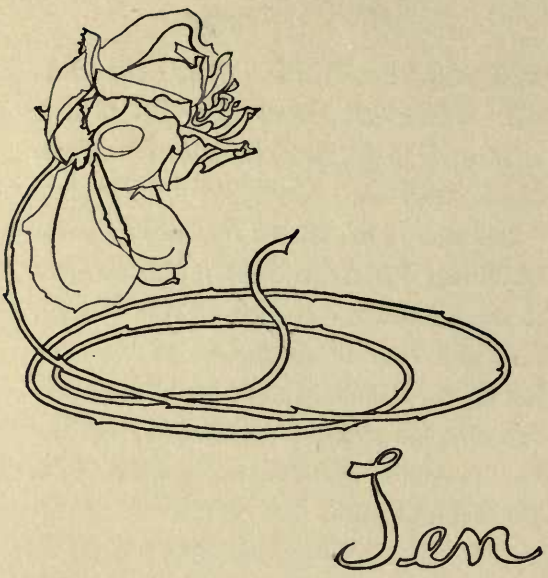
There was a thing which she had constantly been imagining herself doing, yet had not, so far, come near resolving to do. The thought of it, whether colored with desire or repugnance, had been an obsession. She was no nearer now than ever to a resolve, the fruit of reflection, but the shortness of her time seemed to precipitate her upon action.

When Nelly had decided — as, after sitting an hour or more watching her finger follow into all its intricacies the pattern in the table-cloth, she did decide — to invest a blind impulse with the dignity of a deliberate move, a world of uneasy sensibilities dropped to sleep within her.

In climbing certain stairs that day, she

went with an assured step; she was to herself a young lady merely who goes to look at pictures in a private studio, as it is not uncommon to do.

She bore in her mind a fragmentary image of all that was about to pass. She intended to stay a moment only. She wished with her own eyes once to see Juliane Wildermuth, not for the common satisfaction of a present curiosity, but to provide against the discomfort it might be ever after not to know in the least what she was.



As she stopped to take breath at the top of the stairs, she speculated calmly regarding the mood in which she would presently be descending them.

She knocked at a door. With the superficial half of a dual consciousness, she reflected upon the studio not being in Miss Wildermuth's family mansion, of which the noble

mother let some part to students; but in a building which she shared with other artists.

For a long moment nothing happened. Nelly thought she would turn and run for dear life. What was she doing here? It seemed to her suddenly that she had not come of her own free will—But before she had stirred she heard footsteps.

She fixed startled eyes upon the door, mentally conjuring up the figure on the other side: an insignificant character, please God! who would say that Miss Wildermuth was not in.

The door opened. A woman in an apron that covered her from her neck to her feet stood in the small antechamber formed inside the door by a screen and draperies. In its doubtful light, her hair was of no color. After a glance at Nelly, she took a paint-brush from her mouth, and added it to a sheaf in her left hand.

"Fräulein Wildermuth?" inquired Nelly.

"I am she! Come in, I pray. I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting. I thought I

knew who was knocking, and without ceremony I called 'walk in.' As no one entered, I came to look."

Some portion of Nelly's brain, not engrossed in taking account of Juliane's voice, wondered that, listening acutely, she should not have heard.

She followed Miss Wildermuth. In her first inspiration of the studio air, she detected through a delicate sweetness of lilacs the unmistakable taint of cigarette smoke. She paused on coming from behind the screen, and looked about as the stranger feels privileged to do in such a place. She exclaimed, after a moment, with a candor of almost rustic freshness—inevitably so young an actress overdid her part at first—yet a little as if she forced the words over a barrier of constraint, "How beautiful!"

It was like most studios, but furnished and arranged with more than common felicity. In portions it partook of the pretty woman's boudoir, as in a nook which contained a

couch rich in pillows, and a great Venetian mirror. Many paintings were in view; a few in sumptuous frames, as they had come home no doubt from exhibitions; but the greater part unframed and set wherever there was available space.

Juliane had gone across the room to an easel, and was unbuttoning her apron, which fastened at the back and was not to be quickly managed. While she did this she could look freely at Nelly, who with a very young-seeming sort of awkwardness—not usual in her, but she was not usually troubled with the knowledge of an ulterior motive—was looking at things on the wall.

"I went to a picture-dealer's the other day," Nelly said, in a bare-sounding tone, "and there I was told to come here if I wished to see your work. I thought from that you must allow people to visit your studio. I am going from Vienna very soon. I—I want a few pictures to take home."

"And I who had begun to hope since you

entered" said Juliane with a laugh of unexpected quality, "that you were come to have your portrait painted!" Following upon Nelly's hesitating phrases, her delivery had an effect of more than common freedom and rapidity.

"Oh no!" Nelly shook her head, shot a swiftly searching glance at Juliane, and turned half away to look at a picture hung near the ceiling.

Nelly had spared no pains with her appearance; Nelly was a fresh vision of millinery triumph. But, even more arresting than her hat, her cheek was in delicate flower, her hair was sunny, her eye beamed with a clear ray. She was in effect like a bit of the spring come into the coldly-lighted studio, incarnate in a fashionable girl. It might have been Nelly's preference at this date to look world-wise, returned from all illusion, and a little bored; but such conditions cannot be managed in a day: her features had a native air of girlish goodness she could not dispose of by wishing.

The line of her lifted profile was simple and sweet.

She had not once looked frankly and directly at Juliane, yet had gathered a definite impression of her.

"How people lie!" she thought.

The expression "an enchantress" had created in her young mind an image very different from the woman here; the word beautiful applied to her she had taken in its obvious sense. Now, Nelly thought her the very opposite of beautiful, and could not imagine any one with such a face fascinating anybody. Juliane did not seem to her at all the sort of person one has to reckon with. The strain of the moment was curiously eased to her by this, but the situation generally cheapened. While all her interior self-possession returned, and she no longer dreaded the interview, she conceived a great wish to cut it short, go home and try to forget the whole distasteful matter, proved so trivial.

"Dirty work!" remarked Juliane, looking at her hands and the edges of her sleeves. She had rid herself of her paint-soiled apron and hung it on the easel. She appeared in a black walking skirt and a loose silk bodice of jumbled oriental colors, among which predominated a striking light yellow.

She approached Nelly, who stood examining a picture.

"Did I disturb you at your work?" Nelly asked her, to say something; and from the necessity of the moment rested on her for a polite half-second a wide blue-gray eye, void of all expression.

"Ah, inevitably!" said Juliane. "You will pardon me, but when one comes in the forenoon—the working time of day, you know! But do not distress yourself. I grudge it not to-day. My model has failed me. I was painting flowers, the great lilacs you see there. And I do not love much to paint anything but the figure. And I do not love working in such fine weather."

"I am sorry I broke into your morning," said Nelly stiffly. She added, "It *is* a very beautiful day."

Juliane was now at her side, looking at the same picture. Out of the corner of her eye, Nelly could see the broad mass of light copper-color that was her hair, and the whiteness below it of her face. A suspicion thrilled her that it might be the very unusualness and irregularity of her features that was called their charm and made their reputation.

She drew away, smothered, in spite of herself, by this proximity; and for the liberty to look now squarely and steadily at Juliane, began to talk.

"I am no judge whatever of pictures," she said. At the sound of those time-honored words, she could not help laughing, and her voice after it flowed more naturally, "Don't be afraid! I am not going to add that I know what I like. What I was intending to say is that as I know nothing whatever of pictures,

no opinion of mine on them could be of interest to you, and I will not take the chance of saying by way of compliment the exact things that would be repulsive to you. I was personally acquainted with a painter last summer. It taught me discretion."

"Oh, *ne vous, gênez pas*," interrupted Juliane, in her rapid hemming-in way, with a gayety that savored of sarcasm, as indeed, it seemed to Nelly, did her voice itself, "if you have the least desire to say anything pleasant about my pictures! I will make every allowance! Your friend the painter had surely a much stronger character than I! What a strong character! I had rather, I assure you, be praised for my defects than not praised!"

"Well, then," said Nelly, between sober and uncertainly laughing, and with a little effect of making a retort, "your pictures may be *infectious*, as that painter used to call things, but I like them. To my ignorant eyes they are exceedingly beautiful. I shall be greatly

obliged to you if you will show me all you have."

"I am at your orders!" said Juliane.

When next Juliane spoke, in commentary on the picture she was showing, she spoke in English, unhesitating, accurately pronounced English, very nearly perfect. Nelly felt the heat rising into her face. It might have been considered a piece of affability, this; but Nelly, with the effect of her hostess's personality strong upon her, did not take it for one, nor yet lay it to inadvertence. Her childish first impulse was to continue stubbornly speaking German, thereby crudely to convey that if her German was not always ready and felicitous, she at least thought it no worse than her neighbor's English. But beside the fact that this would have been attempting to sustain a difficult position, Nelly descried an advantage in the opportunity to express herself in her own tongue.

"How glad I am that you speak English!" she said suavely; "I wish I had known at

first, and not made myself ridiculous by attempting your dear jaw-breaking language—"

"I divined—I guessed, as you would say that—it would be a relief to you."

"Oh, no! I should not say guessed there. That is where an English person would say guessed—where it means the same as divined. We only use guess improperly, you know."

"I should have remembered.—Do you recognize this spot?" she asked, abruptly holding up a sketch, as if with it to shut off more of these inanities, "Fontainebleau?"

Nelly wondered, while appearing engaged with the sketch, at the antagonism she felt between this Juliane, who could by no means know who she was, and herself. The sense of their mutual hostility, and disgust at having allowed herself to be drawn into an exchange of rudeness, had made her heart go faster. She wondered what ground Juliane had had to assume with a stranger from the moment of setting eyes on her, that tone tinged with

mockery. Was it the mere attitude of the artist toward the bourgeois who buys? or racial dislike? or Continental impatience of the American who travels? or the objection of the clever to the supposed weak of wit? or contempt for one ten years younger? or desire to humiliate one infinitely prettier? or the simple bad instinct of certain natures to place at a still further disadvantage one detected in the tangles of diffidence? Or was it none of these, but an unfortunate quality of voice and cast of feature that made a person appear to be jeering when no such thought was in her mind?

Nelly felt a need to provide for all these possibilities, barring the last; to assert herself, to remain on the spot until she had better grasped the situation, and shown that she refused to be browbeaten, however delicately. She had lost sight of the large background in which this moment was but a patch; this interview had merits of its own, apart from its relation to the large story.

This haughty Juliane, merely as woman, must not be allowed to take too much for granted with her, insignificant insect as she might appear.

So, instead of rapidly making her selection, and taking herself into an atmosphere where she could breathe better, Nelly examined the pictures offered to her with a forced leisureliness, in her prattle almost inviting Juliane's aggressive phrases, and presenting to them a sunny glassy surface on which nothing could take hold; emerging from swamping remarks as if she shook off drops from herself; exasperating, in the manner of a person who goes on and on playing small trumps.

She thought Juliane considered her a shade more attentively as the moments passed. It was all she desired. She was ready to depart.

Juliane had betrayed in the course of this interchange a frank admiration for Nelly's person, almost impertinent in its expression, yet not ungenerous; and a tinge of cordiality

had found its way at last into her manner. Nelly was inclined by these circumstances to attempt looking in her turn with a just eye upon Juliane. That untidy head, she allowed, might be fairly called picturesque.

A tiny point of pain started burning in Nelly's heart with her admission that the effect of originality of her rival's whole person was interesting; and the apprehension that she might be in truth far more dangerous than she, Nelly, had the cleverness to rightly know. She certainly bore herself like a beautiful woman, and that, Nelly was well aware, goes so far! Nelly recognized that she had no habit of the world in which this foreigner moved, nothing to guide her in her judgments. Juliane, when she was not engaged in snubbing a silly little American, when she was in her proper element, among glittering officers, nobles, diplomats, artists—students! in a low-cut black frock, with a broad rose in her metallic hair, talking with that bold abundance on every subject under the sun, possibly, very possibly,

was as she had been called "a great enchantress."

Nelly wished to finish quickly, and be gone. She had been paying so little attention to what she was doing, that she did not now know which of the pictures to take. She was so confused, she could not make an instant application of will.

"Haven't you anything else?" she asked. "They are all so lovely, it is hard to choose. Have I seen them all? What—what is the one over there, turned to the wall? It looks more than most of the others the right size for what I want, to fill the space between two windows. Oh, I can laugh too! I know it is an absurd sort of measurement to apply to works of art, but what can I do? There *is* a space between two windows which, other things being equal, I should like filled. Wait! Let me help you to turn it round."

"No, no! Remain sitting where you are! I beg you will not! You will soil your gloves. It is light, it comes easily out of the frame.

It is only a study. I will show it to you, although I know it cannot be what you want to fill your space between two windows. *D'ailleurs*, it is not for sale.

She turned the canvas, and placed it upon the easel.

Nelly looked; a small convulsion of nature took place in her breast. Then her heart sank away, away, seemed to touch bottom, and springing upward, started on a plunging career in a sea of heat. With the soft movement of a tall flower cut at its root, she dropped backward in an attitude of composed contemplation.

She made no comment; she looked. When the moment had come in which it must seem proper in her to make a remark, she cleared her throat as if to do so; but thereupon merely changed her position, and continued scrutinizing the picture.

Juliane had drawn back from the study, and was examining it, too. There was a long silence.

Nelly gazed in deepening wonder. It was unmistakably a portrait of John-Hector, yet not as he had ever appeared to her. He stood painted as another woman saw him. Nothing there suggested the college boy, the good fellow, half-back and hurdler—he did not even look like an American. He was in helmet and armor; his face, without losing its individuality, was classically beautiful; the artist had insisted a little on all his good points. With a painful interest, Nelly let her eye linger on the sweeping eyebrow, the deep chin, the intrepid nose, the square under lip, trying to find the seat of the great difference. As she considered the expression of noble tenderness investing the heroic features, Nelly thought that she might be looking on a study of Hector as he bade farewell to Andromache, Hector at the moment of saying words which she had learned by heart, and often repeated while she played: "*Hector's Liebe stirbt im Lethe nicht.*"

Nelly felt creeping over her sickness of a kind unknown to her until that moment, and the unconcern for the surrounding world that accompanies nausea. A voice started up within her, crying disorderly, "Is it possible! Is it possible!" and forced itself almost to her lips. But she merely hemmed; she made a little meaningless gesture, and again slightly changed her position in the chair.

She had stared too long already without breath of comment, she knew; but yet she stared on, trying with a sense of hurry to make that stranger resembling John-Hector look to her like the John-Hector she had known; give her again for a moment that sense of his belonging absolutely to her. But the young hero painted by another would not. With a morbid impulse to taste the full of a horrible sweet agony invading her, she left her chair, approached the canvas, and with a stiffened face peered into the helmet-shadowed face, caring very little for the instant what appearance she made. For the

instant only. She turned to Juliane a pair of empty eyes, and asked in a light tinny voice, "Is it a fancy head? I mean, is it out of your own imagination?"

"Now, I sincerely hope," said Juliane, with a spited emphasis, "that there is no one in the world except yourself capable of asking me such a question as that!"

"Oh, don't mind me!" said Nelly, and laughed a shade desolately; "and be sure" she pursued, "I don't feel hurt! I am going in half a minute. I think, if it is agreeable to you, I will decide on that one—and that one there, perhaps—and shall we say that other one there?"

Juliane, after following the indication of her finger, looked attentively at Nelly; then made a very slight movement with her shoulders. "As you please!" she said. But she added, after a moment, as if flesh and blood could not let it pass like that, "I hope you have observed how very nearly alike in subject and treatment are the three you have chosen."

"Are they?" asked Nelly, with bewildered interest. "Ah, well," she added tiredly, "it doesn't really matter!"

"Oh, no, naturally," said Juliane, with a more marked movement of her shoulders, "as it is a case of filling the space between two windows."

After brief discussion what disposition to make of the purchases, Juliane sat down at her desk to take the American's address at home. Nelly dictated her name; when Cloverfield followed it, Juliane's pen stopped in the air.

"Cloverfield," repeated Nelly, enunciating clearly.

Juliane looked up with a changed expression, and fixed her eyes upon Nelly's face.

"It is a funny name. It is a little bit of a place," said Nelly, gazing at the skylight; "it is on none but local maps; you won't have met with it in your school geographies over here. I suppose it sounds to you like Paradise for Cows!" She laughed nervously.

"Go right ahead! Cloverfield! You can't make a mistake. It is spelled just as it sounds."

Juliane without a word bent her head over her desk, and the sound was heard of her pen scratching on the paper.

"And now I had better say good morning, Miss Wildermuth. There isn't anything else, is there? I know I have taken up your time unwarrantably. I beg your pardon, and thank you again so very much."

"Oh, not at all!" said Juliane, in a voice altogether different from her voice before. Rising, she stood with one hand on the sheet of paper with the address, and looked down at it. She did not offer to show Nelly to the door; Nelly lingered a moment, civilly, supposing there was still something to be said. As she stood, half waiting, she considered the point of her parasol, with which she goaded the point of her shoe. She glanced up after a moment for the reason of this pause, and found Juliane looking at her with a curious

effect of intensity. It was plain that there still was something to be said.

"Is there anything more we ought to think of?" Nelly asked, looking around the room as if for a hint. "I always feel as if I were forgetting the most important thing of all. But you know my hotel. I will send you a check from there this afternoon."

"How long do you think to remain in Vienna?" asked Juliane.

"We expect to leave to-morrow morning. But expecting to-day really lays no obligation on to-morrow. Did you ask for any special reason? It amounts to this: We shall go as soon as I am ready."

"Oh, you Americans!" exclaimed Juliane, with a laugh that did not prevent her words from having the effect of being cast up by an explosion of impatience; "especially the young girls!"

"What is the matter with us?" asked Nelly, and she turned astonished eyes full on Juliane the better to interpret her exclama-

tion. Their glances crossed, then Nelly looked elsewhere. The blood rushed into her cheeks; she was possessed of a nervous feeling that in a moment she should not be accountable for what she did or said. It was the insane irritation Juliane allowed to show in her face which communicated itself, as by an electric flash, to Nelly, and coming upon the strain of the trying interview excited her to the verge of shaking.

Juliane took three strides forward, then three strides back, with the grand movement of a lioness rampant, and tossed her head with the coruscating mane.

"Heaven, earth and all the people on it," she said, "time, eternity, nature, art, express-trains, Mr. Worth and the Bank and I myself with my imbecile pictures—all, all were made for the purpose of serving the whim of the young American female of nineteen!"

Nelly did not speak at once; she wondered a little wildly whitherward they were tending. Then, with a sudden letting go of herself, she

slipped into a current she had for some time felt tugging at her; in a mood, she too, to stride up and down, superbly; feeling a dislike, she too, to parting from the other woman before they had seen with greater clearness into each other. She felt awaked in her a primeval savage something which suggested what glorious delight might be in wiping by her own unaided industry this troublesome, arrogant, antipathetic neighbor forever from the face of the earth. But she stood tranquilly, looking cool, and far from primeval. She said, with a little drawl in her voice—not intended, the effect of her effort to keep it steady—"Heaven and earth, if you choose—trains and Worth and banks, of course—but how has America in my person affected you except as you might wish? You *want* to dispose of your pictures, don't you?"

Juliane had returned to her desk, and was looking down at the paper on which she had written Nelly's address.

"Cloverfield! Cloverfield!" she said.

"That certainly is my home!" said Nelly. "That is certainly where my father and mother are at this moment living!"

"Then why," asked Juliane, impetuously, "did you ask me if that picture on the easel originated in my own mind?"

"Pray, what is the connection?" said Nelly, feeling herself turn rigid, and her eye dangerous.

Juliane looked at her narrowly. "Because," she replied after a moment, more impetuously, "if you are Miss Nelly Brown, of Cloverfield, you know that face at least, at the very least, as well as I do."

"What makes you think so?" asked Nelly; and still capable of control over her eyebrows, she raised them. "Who is it?" she subjoined, and with an affectation of deep quiet went to the easel, and gazed on the study of the Trojan warrior.

"Do you now recognize it?" asked Juliane, hard beside her. "Do you see in it on looking closer a good friend of old days?"

Nelly shook her head somewhat haughtily. "No!" she said. She added, looking Juliane directly in the face, "I have apparently forgotten him."

Juliane laughed her unfriendly derisive laugh. "Ah, I see! I understand you! You have done, then, I must tell you, the best thing that there remained for you to do."

"You speak in riddles," murmured Nelly, and walked away from the picture toward the door. "I never guessed one in my life. Perhaps because I never trouble to."

"Ah, my dear young lady," said Juliane, without following her—how loth she was to let her go appeared in that withholding; but it was in the very atmosphere that she had that on her heart of which she was determined to ease it in this, the solitary opportunity, perhaps, of a lifetime—"Ah, my dear young lady, how enviable are you!"

"No doubt!" said Nelly. She had a boding sense that though her footsteps were directed toward the door, she should not so soon

be leaving the studio. She accepted with a bloodthirsty acquiescence Juliane's plans for her. She was given grace at this point for an instant to know fully that she was turning her back on the light of good sense; by its last ray she apprehended a fantastic quality this scene was taking on, impossible, she would have thought, outside of a cheap comedy, an unrealistic novel; but she was blind to any means of escaping it, if indeed she were not, in the incalculable perversity of the blood, purposely shutting her eyes.

"Oh, but quite more than you can know!" Juliane continued.

"Hardly. I know all you can mean! I *am* enviable! I am one of those persons of whom, when they die, every one says they had everything to live for."

"Oh, but you are so more enviable on account of what you have not!"

"True. I know that too; all the evils I have been spared."

"It must be such a satisfaction," irrele-

vantly said Juliane, working ardently toward a complete opportunity to express her mind, "to be constituted as you are!"

"It is," said Nelly, readily, "an undoubted blessing." She had meant merely to parry, but now, Juliane hesitating, she continued the engagement, before she had reflected, with a small thrust of her own. "But you seem to know a great deal more about my constitution, Miss Wildermuth, than you can have divined, unless you are tremendously deep, at this single meeting!"

"Oh, I know you perfectly! You are just what I should have imagined! I wonder I did not recognize you on the instant! I did, of a truth; not in the individual, but in the type."

"It is a type apparently you are not at pains to be very polite to. I am sorry, but the individual is going home without waiting for the expression of your whole opinion." And Nelly, who had been able to say this laughingly, should here, undoubtedly, and

would, have made for the open streets, but she could not refrain from saying, and a hurt tone found its way into her voice, "Your opinion, I suppose, has been gathered from your model for the knight-in-armor yonder. It seems a pity, in the abstract, that it should be a bad one. Heroes should speak well of their absent friends."

"Ah, I was waiting for you there! waiting for you to admit that you knew *den* Hector yonder!—I do not know, I am sure, if you know who I am. I do not know if it was pure chance that brought you here."

"What do you mean? I told you! It was the picture-dealer sent me. But your fame, undoubtedly, if you mean that—your fame had reached me long before!"

"Excuse me, but I am going to be very, very frank with you. You—you belong to the sort of woman—the sort of woman I detest! There, at last! That is what I have been hoping there would offer some natural conversational opportunity for saying

to you!" said Juliane, possessed with a quiet fury, yet keeping up a feint of laughing that for a space prevented Nelly's grasping the whole intention of what she heard. "There, it has done me good! I feel much lighter. Oh, take for granted that I know all about you—we may as well be frank with each other! Or, say it is merely your type that I know: I detest you for all the deliberate harm it is in you to do, with your appearance of a sugar angel! Yes, for all your cold, beastly selfishness, your colossal vanity—yet so petty! You *banal*, little, small-clawed, predatory bird! You cheap flirting-doll! The kind of woman I am detests the kind you are, as a being that can feel and suffer and compassionate, detests one who can do none of those, but with supreme composure impose tortures on such much nobler beings than herself. Oh, we know quite well of what we are talking! Always I have longed to have you before me, to be able to tell you what I think of you. A thief, a creature of

the streets, is respectable by the side of you!"

Nelly, pale, heard with open mouth; she here tried to swallow, but her throat was paralyzed. She could not have uttered a sound, shocked as if physically by a pelting shower. Nothing she had known in her life had prepared her for this.

"That stupid, empty prettiness!" said Juliane rabidly, no longer taking pains to leaven her remarks with laughter; "You think it everything necessary in this world to look like a little *genre* picture, like a colored plate in a fashion-book! When you find that such small means enable you to deal fate and heartbreak—men are such fools, after all, and such children!—you arrange yourself with a holy calmness to see to just how many, and to just what point. Truly, women like you should be suppressed—they cast too great discredit on the rest. But why do I rail? Nature equals these matters, triumphantly. You have your due recompense in the end. Hearts

win, after all, finally, always, against mere complexions! We are the better apportioned, after all, who have hearts!"

"I have nothing at all to say to all this," now interrupted Nelly, hurriedly. "No ma'am, no!" she raised her voice and one gloved hand—"please let me speak and take my leave. I do not choose to be spoken to in this way. I have not the advantage of a temper like a man-eating bulldog which I can spring upon persons whose existence annoys me. No, pardon—it is my turn! I have not understood the application of much that you have said, but I could not be mistaken in your tone. You can hardly expect me to stand here and take more insult from you. It must seem interesting, though, upon reflection, to you as to me—" in spite of all effort to keep it firm, Nelly's voice here shook perceptibly—"that your grounds for the abuse you have thought you had a right to heap upon me must have been derived from the person there, our friend in the helmet, my treatment of

whom you have seemed to intimate has not been fair—or else I have not understood you at all, and you have struck at me blindly, at a type, as you say. I could hardly give less than he deserved, could I, to one capable of giving me the character he seems to have given me with you?"

"He?" came in a great contralto note, "He has never once, so far as I can remember, spoken your name!" Juliane's tone and looks expressed a curious exaltation. "Never! Believe me or not. He came to our house, but newly landed from the New World, with the most joyous light of hope in his eyes that I had ever seen. I observe faces, you know; it is my trade. He seemed to me, at my first sight of him, the ideal of strong youth. He plunged into his work with the gay vigor of a giant who sees the goal and the prize ahead. Then, in a few months, his face was altogether changed. I knew by the instinct that does not deceive that he was suffering from a heart trouble. As all

that had come to change him had come since he lived under our eyes—for he has been as one of our family—I could make an intelligent conjecture concerning it. When his face had grown at last as stonily sad as it seems possible for one to become, I—for I have a heart—decided that this should cease. Yes, I thought it time to put an end to his exclusive preoccupation with a girl left in America, to alleviate the torment an unknown was pleased to put him to. He awakened—very slowly, I will admit, but he awakened—to feel that he had an excellent friend closer at hand. I had determined to divert him? I do not take a determination like that in vain. Ah, I could teach you something, you pretty young woman! though you could be a model to me in coolness and caution, in governing one's tongue and keeping one's temper. I could teach you to sink your miserable *mesquin* pride in the happiness of smoothing out the creases of life for another. That, after all, is what we are here for, we women—and so

far as we are imperfect lovers, you know, we are failures! And the newest woman as well as the most ancient in her heart of hearts knows her destiny. And so it will be, the same with all, to the end. Ah, the girl in America may in her cold little vanity think to make herself more prized by the difficult height at which she suspends herself—the woman close at hand, devoted, self-forgetting, patient, will not be far in the wrong. You come late, *ma toute belle*, if you have come to take him back. I advise you not to attempt it. Yet you can scarcely complain of inconstancy in him. You are the fair lady, I suspect, who tossed her glove to the lions for her cavalier to recover, and sat safe on her cushioned seat watching him. But you know what happened."

"Yes, yes, I have read it. But I thought you said just now that he had never spoken of me. What then should you know of the circumstances?"

"But I did not say that I had not taken

pains to find out! Great pains, my dear —great pains! And when I try, I promise you it is to some purpose. And do not forget that we have lived in the same house."

"One might not unnaturally think—I judge only from what you yourself say—that you had not been above spying."

"What is that?—It was not necessary. He told me whatever I wished to know without suspecting that he did so! He is reserved enough, in all truth, but in the end is—twenty-three!"

"No doubt he would be, a boy like that, a baby in your hands."

"You are intending a sneer, I understand. But how wasted your irony! Better, you must agree, a friend, good comrade and counselor, a companion, loyal and generous and discreet and wide-minded, than a tyrannical, selfish, cold little *bonne amie* of his own age. —*Armer* Hector!" Juliane went to the picture, and stood in contemplation before it, her face retaining the passionate heat that

had glowed increasingly in it; she shook her head with an effect of profound feeling. "How noble and simple he is! Really a wonderful, a rare, an exquisite nature, totally out of place in this prosaic age. He is like the young hero of an old epic. I grow angry still again, and my heart must ache a little, remembering those earliest days. What I first observed was that his letters were written on two kinds of paper. How youthful! My curiosity was piqued: in long common envelopes to persons of his own name, and to Miss Nelly Brown of Cloverfield on very much finer paper, the envelopes square, and not gummed—sealed with wax, and perfumed wax! And he wrote to her twice a week for a while, but I could never among his letters see one that looked like an answer. There is a something about a love-letter, as you know. Most of those he received had a sisterly air and a strong calligraphy. And he used to wear a rose in his buttonhole. As far as you saw him, you knew that he adored some one.

And there was a photograph of a mysterious hand holding flowers, and by his bedside, as if it had been a book of devotion, a dictionary, marked on the fly-leaf "Nelly Brown, Cloverfield." It showed great unthrift, I must say, in the girl who let so much ardor die for want of an occasional kind word. What a fool, let pass her cruelty! Well, well, Heaven decrees that one should not die of such things. All is remedied now. He takes life pleasantly again; but that is not his maiden's fault—it is to the praise of some one kinder. Indeed, why have I been making myself all this bad blood? I do not believe, after all, that you have come here with any thought of him. It would not accord with the rest of your conduct. I really think it was chance that brought you, and that you did not even take the trouble to let him know you were in the city. Perhaps you had forgotten his address. He is absent anyhow, and it would not have served. I am sure I do not know why I mounted into such rage——." It had

been during the latter phrases as if a thunder-cloud began to break and scatter and let hints of the sun drop through. "No, I do not know what made me lose my temper so; I really beg your pardon for it. It was retrospective indignation—retrospective jealousy, perhaps; you see that I am frank; but I am the most impassioned of friends!—or perhaps the thought that you had come to stir him from his torpor to new suffering. You could not certainly do much, but something it is still possible you might. I forgot that you are leaving Vienna to-morrow. I think almost, as I look at you, that I may have been mistaken in the circumstances of your acquaintance. You are perfectly indifferent, as I see. But why did you feign at first not to know him in his portrait? It was a gratuitous piece of hypocrisy. Well, well, we sometimes do not know why we do a thing. I am sure, for example, I do not know why I have made you a scene.—So, I will have the three carefully packed and shipped to

Cloverfield. I hope, Miss Brown, you will have a very pleasant journey." The clouds had retired below the horizon; the sky was smiling, pure cerulean.

"Thank you!" Nelly turned to leave, walking as one in a dream.

Miss Wildermuth walked beside her. At the door, she put out her hand with a frank and amiable look. Nelly looked directly at it, without responsive motion of her own hand, then into Juliane's eyes, with eyes quite grey.

"No," she said, "I won't!—I am not going to constrain myself. With you it certainly seems unnecessary. You have been frank enough yourself. I have seen the relief it is. I almost feel impelled to give myself the luxury of being frank, too!—Though I don't really know why I should bother to say anything more. It would be so simple to let you believe just what you please! How does it affect me to be called a *banal*—what was it? Bird! Flirting-doll! Some mon-

strosity! I am going away to-morrow. But I feel surging in myself a crazy desire to set your mind straight on some points. It must be imitative insanity! I am certainly going away to-morrow, so it no wise involves me, it entails nothing. And I have good reason not to fear its going any further than you. Do you wish to hear? Shall I tell you?—No, thank you, I won't come in and sit down again. I sha'n't be long and can stand where I am.—I don't know how much you know of the former relations between John-Hector Holmes and myself. You made a good guess, anyhow, when you spoke of the lady throwing her glove among the lions. It wasn't unlike that, but it was still more like that old nursery-tale in which a princess sets tasks to a shepherd, by which if he is successful he may obtain her hand. On the face of it, it may seem rather hard that while the princess sat in a cushioned seat, as you describe her, the shepherd should have been expected to

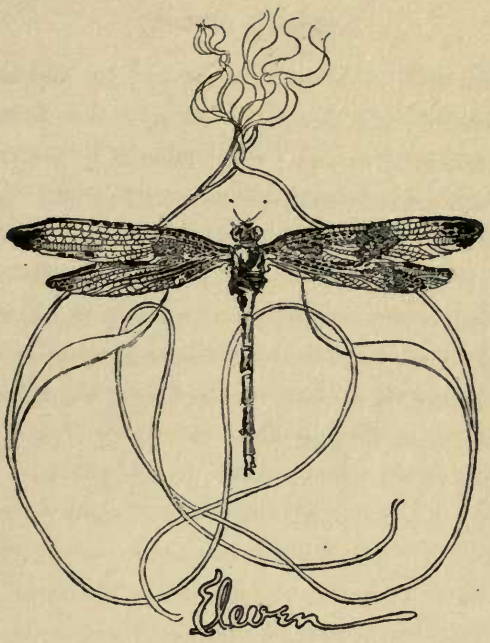
struggle, suffer, perhaps—But then some shepherds would have endured to the end. It all depends on the kind of shepherd. The princess supposed he was that kind. Well, he is not. He is not the shepherd any more of that particular story, nor is she the princess. They have nothing more to do with each other, and it all ends. But I want to tell Miss Wildermuth for her personal edification how the fairy-story as far as it went varied from the one we know.—No, I do not wish to sit down. I have nearly done.—That benighted girl felt so strongly for her swain in his hardships that she set herself a task quite as hard as his, and chose to be poor and hard-working like him, just as long as he was. Indeed, I have not had a good time, in the ordinary sense, since our separation. What an idiot I was! I came away from every one I knew, as he had done; I had to give up quite a lot of things. I made my personal income as trifling as I knew his to be. I worked as hard over a lot of stupid

books and music as I supposed he was working. I would not let him do more than I was doing! My dear Miss Wildermuth, do you seize the fine shades of the situation? While you were so successfully consoling and diverting him, as you explained to me, I was trying, as I supposed, to make myself worthy of him—worthy of so much love as he was giving me proof of! And what did I think he was doing, after all? Fitting himself to make a living, as every man has got to do—at least in America it is so, if he wants people to respect him—doing the only decent thing there was for him to do! Hereafter, let me tell you, I shall amuse myself indeed, with the serene conviction that, such as I am, I am quite good enough for any man. But isn't it an amusing thought? While you, so full of heart, were teaching him to forget one so devoid of it, I—You won't suppose it in the least matters. Nothing on earth matters much, we both know. I care very little, or I couldn't tell you about it so quietly,

could I? It is an episode! A thing is, then ceases to be. I shall not think of it again after to-day. But it is natural, isn't it, that I should want you to know how uncalled for you have been? I am going away to-morrow on a pleasure-trip that I intend shall last the rest of my life. I shall not interfere with you. You can go right ahead without uneasiness in your process of consoling.—I perceived from what you said that our methods are very different. I don't mind telling you that I shall never think of adopting yours. But they do interest me! Fancy coaxing or humoring or pampering a man! How frightfully bad for them! They are so conceited as it is. Pointer for pointer: I would trample on them, if I were you. I am sure in the end you will get better results.—Good morning. I had just as soon shake hands with you now. Let us do so, Miss Wildermuth, and make a pretence that we are civilized beings!"

Juliane took the hand that Nelly held out; as for a moment she neither shook nor released

it, Nelly was not a little nervous lest she should hold on to her by it, and continue quarreling on some other line. But here she was struck by the expression in Juliane's face, quietly aghast and wholly absent. She tugged gently at her hand. Juliane mechanically retained it by a pressure, then, with that characteristic gesture of her shoulders, dropped it, opened the door for her without a word, and, Nelly passing out, hurriedly shut it.



NELLY had been sitting several minutes in the motionless carriage, when the coachman asked her if she wished to be taken back to the hotel. She stammered, "No—no! Take me a drive—out of town—yes, anywhere! —Go till I tell you."

She had been driven through many miles

of country, before she thought to bid the coachman turn. Her mood, by that time, had softened. A wistful sadness had fallen upon her face. Happiness she would do without; the thought of happiness, indeed, made her impatient; it seemed inseparable from romance, and romance affected her as the tender green and pink of pistachio and strawberry ice-cream a child who has had a surfeit of them. The contemplation of her life as she now pictured it brought quiet: the life of one who in calm and dignity pursues her way, without demanding or expecting to be happy, complaining to no one, reproaching no one, desiring with any activity only the approval of her acts by her higher intelligence.

She leaned back with a weary little noble air, pale with unwitting hunger, for it was hard upon three, and she had not lunched.

So she was passing into the *Hof* of her hotel, when a man who stood near the outer entrance looked at her. She did not know

that he had done anything to attract her attention; she was not conscious of sign or sound on his part. But she turned to look at him, in mechanical response. Was it—no, it was not—yes, it was, John-Hector.

She had been carried past. Her heart was behaving badly. After a moment, as if nothing had occurred to weaken her knees, she alighted from the carriage. She made an unnecessary inquiry of the gold-laced blond who came to assist her, and went to her apartment.

Murrie returning found awaiting her an incomprehensible Nelly. Murrie entertained her with the detailed narrative of their jaunt, expecting some sort of account, in return, of Nelly's use of the morning; but in her expectation she was disappointed. Nelly, though looking indefinably unlike herself, did not complain of her health. She dined with the rest, talked little less than usual, and left them late in the supposition that they should

all be starting westward together early on the morrow.

When she came to her room, and Murrie addressed herself to packing, Nelly said, after watching her a moment, "You needn't."

"Needn't what?"

"Pack."

Murrie took a seat, and gazed at Nelly. "What exactly do you mean, dear?"

"I am not going to-morrow with the rest. Don't look at me with that expression, Murrie! There's nothing more to it than that. I don't want to go to-morrow, and I don't want to go with the rest."

"Very well," said Murrie, with deep quiet. She got up and with ostentatious unostentation took various things out of a trunk tray, stripped them of tissue paper, and re-ordered them on the dressing-table. Her whole person exhaled an atmosphere of hurt feelings.

Nelly's eyes followed her a while as she moved about, doing for her in dead silence

the offices of a maid. Nelly heaved a helpless inaudible sigh, and began undressing.

She had got into bed and turned toward the wall, when Murrie said:

"I suppose I had better go and tell them."

"I suppose so."

"What shall I say?"

"Oh—anything!"

"Now, Nelly, you know it won't do to say merely that you don't want their company. You know that, unprincipled as it may be, out of decency we shall have to invent a story of some sort."

"Very well, invent one."

"I suppose I could say, with some show of reason, my dear child, that you have gone completely mad!"

Nelly turned quickly in the bed, bending upon Murrie her blackest scowl. "Murrie, if you don't stand by me now, you will undo all you have ever done to make me like you!"

Murrie instantly rushed forward, caught

Nelly, and while Nelly with all her strength was pushing to free herself, kissed her in the neck. "My darling precious, I will tell bouncers for you till I drop, and you know I will! All I ask is a little assistance from your younger and fresher imagination!"

"No! You must do it all. It's only respectable to lie for some one else," and Nelly turned again to the wall.

Murrie muttered playfully, "It would do Pa and Ma Brown good to hear you!" put out the light, and left her.

In the morning Mrs. Potter and Florence came stepping softly into the darkened bedroom, and bade Nelly good-bye without one question. Their kisses had an effect of forbearing sympathy. They expressed their trust that she would soon join them in London, and were quickly gone.

As Nelly lay wondering what was the masterly thing Murrie had told them, Murrie herself came in with a soft chuckle. Knowing that Nelly was awake, she opened the shut-

ters, and came to sit as usual upon the bed's edge, and "tell her all about it."

She had not proceeded far in telling, when her attention abruptly fell from the subject.

"Why, Nelly!" she exclaimed, bending forward and looking curiously into the girl's face, her forehead contracted into lines of dismay.

"What is it?" said Nelly huskily.

"Why, my darling, you look as if—why, my own precious baby,"—her voice dropped to a tone of awe—"*have you been crying?*"

"No!" said Nelly crossly, "I have a cold in my head!"

Murrie did not dispute the assertion; she considered her charge with an effect of being frightened at what she saw. Nelly, with a suggestion in her movement of squirming, turned her disfigured countenance away from her friend's anxious scrutiny; as she did so, tears came crowding into her weakened eyes. She lay unnaturally quiet, and so sat Murrie.

After a long sympathetic silence, "Nelly,

listen, dear," said Murrie. "Why don't we just pack up and go home to Cloverfield?"

"You think it would cure my cold!" said Nelly, witheringly.

"Hush, dear, hush!—Oh, childie, darling," —Murrie dropped on her knees beside the bed, and tried to take Nelly, who resisted, in her arms—"why don't you make a friend of me? Why do you treat me like the commonest stranger? You know there's nothing upon God's earth I wouldn't do for you.—Here I have been with you every minute for months and months, trying faithfully to be hands and feet to you, and you have something on your heart that has made you cry till your face is fairly blistered, and you tell me it is a cold in your head, and with that I am to be satisfied. Upon my soul, Nelly, I don't think I am being fairly treated!"

Nelly by this time was crying immoderately, and Murrie stopped speaking to dissolve in tears. They fell to hugging each other, and Nellie stroking the hair off Murrie's

face seemed to be turning its color: it was silver where it usually showed black; the fading face so framed looked softer, more benignant.

"Oh, Murrie, Murrie," Nelly gasped, "I am cold-hearted as a stone! It is just like me, just like me, to go on and on taking all you do for me, and all your affection, never thinking much about it! And it's just the way things go in this life that then something should happen to take you away from me, and that then I should know how much I cared, and break my heart over it!"

She was crying so violently, this Nellie little given to tears, the things she said seemed so unhinged, that Murrie, after long trying to quiet her, became seriously alarmed, and drew off to contemplate her, no longer doubting that she looked upon some critical form of nervous collapse.

With the sense that here was a situation that called for action, Murrie rapidly composed herself. Nervous collapse to her ex-

plained everything. No further reason need be given for Nelly's late incomprehensibleness and present tears. She took at once with her the gentle and tender manner she would have used toward a sick child.

When, in spite of remonstrance, Nelly would get up, she helped her to dress; from the depths of the trunk she fetched a tea gown for her. With fondling words, she arranged an armchair and little table with books and bromide in a window overlooking the *Hof*, and made Nelly, who meekly lent herself to this fuss, comfortable in it with cushions. When she could find nothing more to do for her, she kissed her.

"Where are you going?" asked Nelly, sure of a farewell element in this embrace.

"Well, since we are not leaving to-day, I thought I would go out and do several things."

Nelly seized the evasiveness in this; she knew what Murrie meant to do. She thought a moment, then said, "Could you, dear, just

as well as not, while you are out——" etc., etc. She had set her a lengthy errand. It seemed to the poor child that she should smother if she were not let alone.

As Murrie was leaving, Nellie called after her, "Murrie, mind you don't bring a doctor. I won't see him, if you do. There's not a thing the matter with me!"

Murrie stood in the doorway a moment, without turning; then, without argument, left. On her way down, she reflected that if there had been anything to find out, she had not found it.

As soon as Murrie had gone, Nellie pushed away the little table, and jumped up. Anything was easier than sitting still. The necessity to keep still before Murrie had been trying her to the limit of her new penitent patience.

Never could she have imagined the condition she was in; she could only think, by way of object to compare with herself, of a hare caught in a hunter's trap. She seemed

to have been caught in a horrible unsuspected trap of her own feelings. She could as little endure what she felt, in quiet, as could the hare.

"When did everything change? How? Where was my mistake?" she asked confusedly, looking over the past. She had been going, open-eyed, on a road chosen for its safety, taking one discreet step after another —to end in this morass, masked from her all along with deceitful flowers. When she had last seen John-Hector, had there been anything in their interview foreshadowing this? She laughed aloud to remember the John-Hector of that last night. And she had not seen him since, had had nothing to do with him. How had this difference come about?"

Was love, then, of the nature of a seed, dropped in your heart in perhaps your single soft and unsuspicious moment, suffered by you a while because it seemed so innocently eradicable; then, when you decided most becoming in your case to uproot it, found to

have so grown that you must tear out it and your heart together, for they can no longer be told apart?

She was outraged at what seemed to her a betrayal of nature's; outraged at this liberty taken with man, to make him love against his will. She could not conceive of her life to come; it was a contradiction in terms: Nelly Brown, and disappointed, incurably sad. *Une vie manquée*—hers, Nelly's! For she should never get over this, she was sure; the poignancy would never pass out of her woe at the contemplation of happiness missed. The enormity of her misfortune had struck her still: she had remained in Vienna, not because she wished to—wished or hoped anything, or saw light on any side—but because she could not go, any more than if her knees had been broken. She did not attempt to explain it.

At the crossing of her glance with John-Hector's, she had known, for the first time, what it had all meant which had taken place

between them, and all that had been quietly at work in her breast since then. She had felt that of the innumerable souls created, there was but one belonging with hers, and that one this John-Hector's, who had not lifted his hat to her. For he had not lifted his hat to her. The moment before seeing him again, she had been dispassionately arranging with herself to do without him; yesterday morning she had supposed six months the longest it might take to put him out of her mind; and not very long before that, she shuddered to remember, she had considered marrying some one else, off-hand, to prove she did not care a pin. Zest had been missing from life, certainly; but she had said that this was temporary, and taken patience. Then, when their eyes had met, the thought had leaped up full-grown, "It doesn't matter to me what he has done, if he will only come back!"

Nelly in walking up and down wrung her little hands no otherwise than an actress on

the tragic stage. This experience, with a dark touch, seemed to have opened a door on to the night of a mysterious world, where awful eternal powers dwelt, against whom mortal might as well not fight. What was the infliction they stopped at? She was suffering so much beyond any former fancy, that the question had a cowering interest. An element of especial anguish in her anguish was that with this discovery of an incalculable capacity in herself to be hurt had come the recognition of a capacity too—would Heaven but return to smile upon her as it used!—to be happy in a degree she had not dreamed. She half discerned, and was tormented by, a glitter, a glow, a mother-o'-pearly wash, of lights within lights, wells within wells, in an ironical region never now to be attained.

Tears she could not repress started from her eyes. She exclaimed with her whole heart, "God, help me—help me, do!"

She was in the habit of addressing a nightly

prayer to the venerable God of her father and mother, and, to please her mother, she read a portion of His word before breakfast; but it seemed some one different, less forbiddingly majestic, to whom she sent up her appeal, "Oh, God, make everything different—make everything all right!"

Hardly had her prayer left her, burning and throbbing, than she answered herself aloud in a contemptuous voice, "Oh, He won't! He'll do just as He pleases!"

Now, in her aimless, animal-like pacing about, she came to the window; she looked up at the sky, without the object of seeing it, and in the same way down into the court—and there she saw John Hector, where he had been standing yesterday.

She drew quickly out of sight, and, felled to earth by her emotion, dropped on her knees below the window. "Oh, God!" she murmured, with a rush of all her blood to her heart; "oh, God! find a way."

It seemed to her that if it just might be

that John-Hector and she should be again as they were in the old days at Cloverfield, she would never ask God for other grace. It seemed to her that just to belong with that common enough boy down there, idle as he might be, weak of character, wrong-headed, unfaithful to his promises, would be happiness so intense that never anything need be added to it. "To have him back, oh, God, oh, God!" she prayed, "and let everything else be as it will!" There drifted across her remembrance what he had once said, "If we were only savages on a South Sea island, or even poor people working in the same factory!"

She rose a little, and looked down at him, trembling and holding her breath. Could anything so good be true, as that he was coming up?

No; he stood there just as before, looking vaguely at the long rows of windows. He was not alone in the court; people were constantly coming and going, some lingering as

he was doing. There was nothing remarkable in his presence there. A reflection of the sky, gray that day, was on his face. He looked self-contained as ever, but a concentrated sadness spoke in the fold between his eyebrows, a heavy dejection in his shoulders. There was that about him altogether, in his youth and gloom, which might have made any one sorry for whatever it was that had gone so unutterably wrong with him, yet respectful for the size of the discontent his whole being expressed.

Nelly, after a night spent in tears, could not easily control their passage now. She felt them blind her as she watched him, "Oh, I know how it will be! Nothing will happen, nothing to mend it!" she said; "he will stand there, and I here, and he won't come in, and I sha'n't go out. And I shall leave, and he remain behind. He will go from bad to worse, and in my way so shall I. He will never make anything of himself. All sorts of women will make all sorts of a fool

of him, and I shall hear of it. Not one will love him as I, and be patient with everything, and have pride for him, and stick to him till the end. He will go down, down, down. He will lose his hold on himself, he will become reckless, he will be ill by and by, and shabby and neglected, and I shall hear of it; they will tell me, not knowing that I care, and it will kill me as surely as a cancer that takes years to do it!"

She tried to put herself in his place, to account for this and that, to see what it could mean that he should not come up and see her. All she knew was what Percy had told Murrie, and what Juliane had told herself. All she had heard admitted of an explanation that should exonerate John-Hector. Why did he not come and explain? She was ready to believe anything he chose to tell her. There was the possibility, of course, of all being much worse than she had heard, which would justify his not venturing to approach her. His not coming must mean that. But

he loved her; he was not there by chance; she knew by intuition, by former divination of the manner of heart he had, that he was there because he had not been able to stay away, weak as she knew him of old, moth to his last breath. But he was incapable of telling lies, so he remained outside. "Oh, why doesn't he come?" she said, "and, whatever has happened, understand that Nelly will forgive him all!" She lost sight of the Nelly he had been brought up to believe in.

"Why does he stand there like a pole!" she raved. "He can't go on standing there all day, in that ridiculous fashion! But oh, he mustn't go!—God knows he mustn't go!" and she stamped her little feet.

She could not doubt at last that he was arousing comment among the hotel officials, conspicuous as he was. She was suddenly sure of it. She saw a man, of whom she had taken no account till then, speak to another, and point at the lounger. The other man

looked, said something, and both stood looking.

Heat of very terror burned Nelly. How could she have forgotten? John-Hector was in danger of arrest. He should have been in hiding. And there he stood, openly braving justice. Where had her senses been? He might be taken under her eyes.—Oh, what to do!—Clearly she ought to warn him. Those men might be nothing but the most harmless private persons, but on the other hand—

She rang the bell, ran to the writing-table, and scribbled on a card. When the servant came she gave it to him with hurried directions. Then she posted herself at the window and watched. It seemed impossible but that her aid should come too late, but that the detectives who were watching John-Hector should interfere.

She saw the servant approach him, hand him the card; she saw John-Hector, after reading it, follow the servant. No one stirred to stop him.

"God be thanked!" broke forth from Nelly as he passed out of vision, and an excess of feeling for a moment made it impossible for her to move.

From a tremendous height of consciousness, she dropped to earth, and dashing into her bedroom, held cold water to her eyes, and disguised her sorrily stained cheeks under a shower of violet powder; with a turn and a few pats adjusted her head, which she had been seizing between her hands in such despair a moment before, to a seeming of merely artistic disorder.

Steps dawned in the hallway. She returned to the sitting-room.

A pause in the steps, a knock, a little cough from herself, and the door opened.



Twelve

JOHN-HECTOR stood in the doorway. He was noticeably pale, a brownish drab rather than white. His features, under better control than his color, expressed little; his manner was the stolid manner she had sometime known.

A wave of exultation had swept over Nelly

at the sound of him nearing the door; her hands had shut with a sense of tremendous power, of being herself once more mistress of the fates of every one concerned. Whatever was about to happen, when John-Hector re-crossed the threshold it would be as her slave.

At his entrance, it was as if a leaf turned over in life: from a page where the text had strained fluttering at a confused vertiginous height, to one of simple and common reading. She was another Nelly at once; she was the Nelly of his former acquaintance.

With her prettiest society manner, she held out a little frozen hand, and began without loss of a second, in a superficial society voice, "Well, this *is* a pleasant surprise!"

John-Hector took the hand, with the slightest possible effect of being staggered.

After the conventional half-second of holding it in a common grasp, as if coming to himself, he gave it a convulsive pressure, and did almost as if to draw her nearer by it; but

as suddenly relinquished the idea and her hand.

She had apparently noticed nothing. She smiled very sweetly, and pointed to one end of the sofa, on the other end of which she took a seat.

"Well, well, well!" she said, as people will when they chance upon one another unexpectedly in foreign places. It might have seemed that she had never been more than a slight acquaintance; or that she had completely forgotten their affectionate parting, not thinking passages of the sort of sufficient importance to remember.

"Well, well, well! Now sit down there, and tell me all about yourself. It *is* a long time since we last saw each other!"

John Hector was not prompt with a reply.

Nelly did not wait for one. "Weren't you surprised to see me?" she asked, with the well-known sunniness; "for it was you, wasn't it, I passed yesterday as I was driving in? I felt almost sure it was, though I

haven't seen you for so long, and you have changed somewhat; only, I wasn't quite sure because you didn't lift your hat. You didn't know I was here, did you?"

"That you were on the Continent, yes, but not that you were here—till yesterday."

"Of course, it would have been polite in me to drop you a line when I arrived. I surely ought to have! But I heard of some funny trouble you were in—h'm! it seems scarcely delicate to mention it!—with the police! and I didn't suppose there would be much use in trying to find you in your usual haunts. Besides, I wasn't really sure what your address was; you might have changed a dozen times. But, now I think of it, my dear friend, how is it you dare walk out in broad daylight, with a price, so to speak, on your head? Or was it a mean fabrication, all that about a duel and a threatened arrest? Come, tell me the whole story! Am I not one of your oldest friends? Not a breath shall reach home through me! It sounded inter-

esting: a beautiful red-haired notoriety, a flattering portrait, an infuriated rival, an armed meeting—nothing was wanting! You have been living the sensational novels we only read, *pauvres nous autres!* This is a great place, isn't it! How tame it makes America! How stupid Cloverfield days!"

"Don't, dear!" he murmured. He sat rather helplessly, looking straight before him, at nothing, as if he had resigned his body to tortures.

"What do you hear from Ethel?" she went off at a conversational tangent; and without waiting for an answer: "And how are you really getting on with your medical studies? Give it me straight, John-Hector! They think you are doing wonders, I know; that you are a sort of reformed pirate. Of course you would entertain that notion in them. As for me, I always had my little doubts, you know. I think I must have mentioned them before you left. I turn out to have been a great reader of character, don't I?"

"Don't, Nelly!" said John-Hector, again, patiently.

And here, as she was about to go lightly on increasing in her cruelties, without warning, an incomprehensible rush of tears was to Nelly's head. She felt her face flush and tremble, her eyes and throat fill. Nature for the moment was stronger than she; nature, on whom she had heaped contumely, was going to be revenged; she refused to be distorted and crushed.

Nelly sat straighter, in stark horror. She knew then her fatal mistake, to let herself cry as she had done. Alone, in the uncourageous dark, in the posture of defeat, she had thought that alleviation might be found in releasing those long-gathering tears. And one does not indulge them with impunity, it appears; the gates that give them way are weakened by such concession. Or else she should have wept to the exhaustion of all the tears in her body; but she had been afraid to, because of the traces of such a debauch,

with Murrie to consider. Unspeakable trifler! She had cried too much and not enough! and now, how should ever this degradation be wiped out?

She was uncertain whether to rise and go to the window. She feared he would look after her in wonder why she did it, and discover. She turned a little to one side, and made her face rigid, and let her staring eyes drink back their tears. But there was a stupid, unexplainable silence while she was so employed, a disgrace forever. If he should look at her this moment, it seemed he could not but divine. He was looking at her, fixedly, now that she looked away from him; but yet she could not be sure that what was happening was apparent to him.

Until he said, "Don't, dear!" so softly and sorrowfully, and put out an instinctive hand toward her cheek, as he might have done to a weeping child.

She started away from him with blazing eyes, and would have said something indig-

nant, but that she felt it inevitable her voice should be shattered on the first syllable. With an intensity that made her tremble, she hated this force that compelled her to cry when she had refused to; she loathed being a woman with a body weaker than her mind. She sat silent, tear-choked and raging.

"Why," said John-Hector, who withdrew his eyes delicately, and let his forehead fall in his hands, and his elbows on his knees, "why didn't you write to me!"

"Now, that," cried Nelly, in a burst of natural-sounding, if rather hard, laughter, "is *funny*! The least said about that, I should think, the better! Doesn't it seem to you, all taken into account, that it was a sign of superior intelligence in me that I did not?"

"No, dear," said John simply. "I wish —oh, how I wish you had!"

"Well, I—I must say—am glad I didn't!"

Then she remembered something that seemed to save the situation, and wondered

furiously how she could have forgotten to speak of it the moment he entered.

"By the way," she said, "do you know what made me send for you? It was not—oh, no! I confess, it was not the simple desire to see you, touching as a meeting is between two old friends. I saw a man out there watching you so closely I felt sure he had some relation with the justice of this land. I thought it would be exciting to assist you in escaping—help on the yellow-covered novel. You can leave the hotel by the back way, or the fire-escape, if there is one.—You can change clothes with one—with one of the porters—or of the——"

"Stop!" cried John-Hector impetuously, "You sha'n't go on like this! I won't stand it! You think you have a right to say anything to me! You have not, then!—Oh, Nelly," he concluded lamely, as if he got off a tall horse to burrow his forehead in the dust, "don't you understand anything? One could suppose you had no eyes, no heart at

all——" and added, like an injured child, "don't treat me like this!"

Yes, yes, the old John-Hector, the old way. That unfair, that contemptible gentleness that incomprehensibly forced her to cry. She stared him down through her unmanageable returning tears, with a look that said, "I cry, I cry, it cannot be denied. What of it? Let me tell you it bodes no good to you!"

But he took account, at the same time as of the forbidding expression, of the deeply stained lids, the dabbled lashes, the galled white and blue, drowning while it defied. He turned away in pain, and put out his hand uncertainly where hers lay clenched on her little pocket-handkerchief, and covered her hand with his.

There was a moment such as follows the stretching of a string to its highest point of tension (tension enough was in the sinews of Nelly's resisting hand!); that pause during which one questions will the string stand or

will it snap.—Then the unforeseeable happened, as if the string should neither stand nor yet snap, but force the constraining peg to let it down.

This meeting, which still ahead had seemed the cramped, flint-strewn, bespiked passage back to Eden, was on proof showing to be nothing of the sort, but a means rather of driving them further apart. Nelly had been with every moment becoming stiffer, worse-tempered, less approachable; it was clearly impossible to explain things to her, useless to try to appease her; a bristling citadel with a tongue she was, such as the boldest man would hesitate to attempt taking, by storm or strategy. John-Hector did not, verily, look the man to do it. He had been sitting with an effect of apathy that did patently not come from insensibility—a writhing scowl betrayed him—but was rather the attitude of one, without defence, who is being hurt so much that it hardly seems to matter how much more. Nelly herself

saw, with a sort of despair, that all was going to end as she had not intended, through her fault, certainly, but in consequence of laws of temperament she could not bend, and in spite of her honest wish in the matter. The shining garden was growing blurred and problematic; hell-smoke obscured the golden-appled trees, the wells brimming with hyacinth light. It was becoming plain that the pride which she had kept in conceit from her cradle with multifarious offerings, was to be glutted now with a double human sacrifice. "So be it!" said with sanguinary rashness one Nelly of the several that dwelt in the same pleasing body. But another, who recognized in one of the victims herself, feeling upon her hand, tender, apologetic, imploring, the hand of her doomed companion, fellow-sufferer in a cruelest land, rose up in a passion of pity and self-pity, to object, to resist, to lament——

Nelly gave an irrepressible, miserable, pathetic sough, and with a wild little gesture

lifted the only arm she could get the use of across her face. John-Hector with a horrified, choking appeal to her not to, not to, darling, released the struggling hand with the pocket handkerchief to gather all of her in his arms.

And presently, by grace of the Indulgence that does not ask too much of miserable lovers, without having, either of them, done the least to deserve or bring it about—served best indeed by tears she would have shortened life to suppress—they found themselves at the other side of the black passage, scratched and smarting, dishevelled and short of breath, but securely in the delightful close.

They could scarcely see it for their tears, or frame thought for their high-beating hearts, but they apprehended with the first breathing of its enchanted atmosphere, beauties and amenities beyond every dream. The new Eve, once owning herself vanquished—not by Adam, dear, no! but herself, one Nelly by another, Roman by Roman vali-

antly vanquished—returned his kisses with a simplicity that would have marked with elegance the accomplishment of any function. Little was dignity missed! truly, little more than the sacred vesture of Venus, who emerged from it, surely we know, more touchingly beautiful, and not less dignified.

She gloried to be generous, Nelly, this once; she let her head stay where it pleased him it should be; she let pour into her ear what he would, herself not repressing the half-fledged pretty things that fluttered to her lips; she seemed ambitious almost to match him in murmured eloquence, cap his protestations, supply creditable responses to his ecstatical psalming. There was the exalted peace of an exact mutualness between them for a little while.

It could not last, of course. Having touched the bottom depths of emotion, where all is solemn as questions of life and death, they began mounting where capricious ripples dance in sunshine. Their hearts, before

overburdened, with the melting away of the crushing weight, grew crazily light. Nelly laughed suddenly, inconsequently, at something dreadfully serious he said. He laughed back instantly, as he would have sent a ball; and they laughed on and on, in alternation and in unison, youthfully, into each other's faces.

But neither could this stage endure, in a world that perpetually moves. The soft *laisser-aller* of their unreasoning mirth, simple expression of joy in proximity, was presently diminished too. The one first to laugh began sobering, loosing herself, answering abstractedly, not with the harsh effect quite of taking herself back, but of being insidiously subtracted by a thought that cut off his access. The zone of perfect weather had been passed.

John-Hector felt, with a small growing dread, the suggestion, in the touch of chill upon the paradisal blossoms, of a bad half-hour at hand perhaps for him. One thing, however, was become henceforward forever

impossible, as he believed: that he again should lose her; there was no ordeal in view of this for which he could not manfully have braced himself.

He had not stopped talking because she only half listened.

"Lord!" he now exclaimed, inviting the inevitable; "what infernal rubbish it all seems that passed through my head a few minutes ago, when I was standing out there looking up at five hundred windows one of which might be yours! I thought there was nothing left me but to curse God and die. I thought I was too much ashamed ever to venture to approach you again. I thought ——"

"Don't!" said Nelly, sitting stiffly up. He looked at her in interrogative suspense: she let the hand she had raised to stop him drop on his knee, and beat time on it with her palm to an inaudible tune, her eyes fixed upon her rings, as if nothing interested her so much. "Don't tell me anything."

And as a little uneasily he watched her mouth, to gather what more from that rosy puzzle, something subdued him immensely in the inhabitual seriousness uncurling its Cytherean line. It first came home to him now that here was another Nelly from his wayward charmer of old. He seized the difference worked by the time elapsed since Cloverfield. An indescribable feeling laid hold on the beats of his heart, one element in which was abasement, but infinitely sweet.

"You see," she said, staring ahead with that unknown sincerity and profoundness of expression, "you see—" and finding it apparently difficult to speak, ruffled her brow in the way he knew so well, and while she cast about for words beat time as before to the inaudible music—"you see that since I have found that I am going to forgive you whatever it may be you have done, it would be a useless humiliation to us both that you should tell me what it is. Don't tell me anything! I don't want to know!"

She glanced up quickly after a moment to interpret his silence, and instantly lowered her eyes in a sort of modesty.

"You know, dear," she said in a monotonous, hesitating tone, with the same effect of finding it difficult to hit upon the word she wanted, and no less so to propel her voice, "you haven't any reason to feel grateful to me for it at all. It's not magnanimity, it's common or garden fairness. I have had so much time to think—I have turned everything about in every conceivable light. I can see now how hard on you it was that I should do—as I did. Though I can't see, either, how I could have done differently. How is a person to be sure she is going to care enough, while she really doesn't—at all events, doesn't know that she does? It seemed doing as much already for us both as I could, that I should give us the chance. The fault seems to me to lie in the whole nature of things itself; or is it our American ways? But all this, since it hasn't

worked to our positive destruction, let us discreetly spare to judge. And we will rub out without reading, won't we, all it might hurt us to remember. I am the *one*, the one of all; it is all I am going to ask. It was very weak, but certainly, when I saw you again, the moment I saw you, dear, I felt that if you were linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes, and that one virtue to care about little me, I should freely remit the crimes. You shall have the benefit now of all I felt when it seemed just like the perversity of things that all should go endlessly wrong, and we never, never be together again. Yes, yes, listen well!"—she flashed at him a warm little smile, and turned on him for a second a more familiar facet of his lady—"for it is probable you will never hear me talk like this again. It is very possible, I warn you, I may see fit hereafter to put an antic disposition on. Whatever I put on, dear, nothing will ever matter so much to me as that you should—oh, I don't know how

to put it!—as that you should *care!* Nothing, dear, nothing, nothing, nothing!" With each repetition, her voice came more earnest, the last plaintive with emphasis; and worth more than all the rosy things said in the overbubbling emotion before, were to him the labored words that ratified them; "and you did use to care. Then if you stopped for a while, it can't be helped. Enough that it all came back the moment you saw me, and now will stay the rest of life—for it will, won't it? And if you l-love me, it doesn't matter what you have done, you will hereafter do what is right. Nothing will ever matter to me by the side of your caring. Whatever comes, remember what I say now as the truest thing I ever said. And remember that it will be true always. I know it. That is all."

Because he did not speak, after a moment she looked at him, and their meeting eyes might read. Each at once looked away from the other, as if it had been physically difficult to

support the bare, earnest light of the soul when it is so near the surface.

He stammered something, awkwardly, scarcely above breath.

They shared a characteristic shrinking from voicing their inmost emotions; they were in intimate understanding of each other in saying no more.

An inexpressible contentment softly took possession of her in the sense of being his, of having it her task to make him transcendingly happy. Feeling so rich, she wondered she had not known before that she was a pauper. To be loved, she had found passing pleasant; to love, torturing; to love and to be loved seemed the gift which receiving one should ask no more. Oh, marvelous, that they two, young beings like thousands of others, who had done nothing to deserve it, should have this overwhelming happiness come to them, more than being elected king and queen over all the nations. A great wave lifted Nelly's heart up, up, in gratitude; not

at this moment for herself alone; for all those others, too, of whom she thought in this way for the first time, great and little of the earth who inherited with her the divine possibility of this joy.

"There is one thing I should like to tell you," said John-Hector, in conclusion to long study of her tranquilly luminous meditative face, "because I couldn't bear to play a part about it, dear, pretending to be surprised at what I know already."

"As you please," said Nelly, in spite of herself a little dryly.

"Yesterday, dearest, when you were at Miss Wildermuth's studio—I was there too."

Nelly instantly released herself. The red flowed stormily over all that was visible of her.

"You will think no evil, dear," said John Hector softly. "It is because I know you will not misunderstand that I want to tell you."

Nelly felt at once that her magnanimity before had really been none, that it would in reality be harder to forgive a known offense than a mass of undetailed offending. Her impulse was to stop him. But the harm was already done, she knew that too; she could have no peace now but from hearing the rest.

"Well?" she said.

"No, darling, no! Not in that voice, Nelly! I don't want to paint myself white, but you won't, because you are forgiving me unconfessed, imagine more to forgive than really there is, will you, dear? I don't see now, of course, how I could let myself go to pieces as I did. Give its share, won't you, to a raging jealousy—not so unnatural, if you think of it—working the devil in me. But that is all past! I won't speak of it again. And, mind, I am not defending myself in the face of your blessed generosity. But what I was trying to tell you: it is true, as you supposed, that I am scarcely at liberty to walk about openly, and so—"

"How then are you—"

"Oh, this is different, entirely. Everything was changed when I knew you were here. I wouldn't have stayed in for them then.—Yes, I was at the studio—Miss Wildermuth very kindly allowed me to come. She has been such a good friend to me, Nelly—she is such a generous nature. The places were extremely limited where I could go. It was becoming such a bore, keeping out of sight. And I was hard up; I couldn't leave town. The studio was such a resource of a forenoon; they would hardly look for me there. When your knock came, the simplest way of meeting the *contre-temps*—it seemed one, dear!—was that I should step into a little side-room, and wait till the visitor had gone. I thought you stayed rather long—try to imagine it, miss! —I heard murmuring voices, but I was reading, I took no account of them. By and by I finished my book, and began wishing you would go. Think of it, darling, I wished you would go! Then you must have come

rather near my door—just beside the door that lets you out—and certainly you raised your voice, and I recognized it."

"*That* was it, then! That was why she kept urging me to come in again and sit down! That was what made her turn white as a table-cloth!"

"Oh, Nelly, when I heard your voice, your dear little American voice, how can I describe what happened inside of me?—Well!—I didn't recollect myself enough not to listen; in fact, I listened with all my soul, and couldn't help hearing what you said.—Darling, don't look like that!" He slipped from the sofa, and knelt, hiding his face in her lap. "Don't, don't be sorry you said it, or that I heard—I shall bless you for it all my life!—But though it was heavenly, it made me feel like the damned."

There was a pause.

"Well?" said Nelly again.

"You know, dear. I went and stood out there."

Nelly looked down at his head—the gilt high-lights of boyish effect were gone, it was not a football head any more—bent over her hands, which she had made limp and not worth holding. She seemed to be looking at him from a great distance. She wondered, ironically, whether he thought what he had said ought to be enough to satisfy any woman.

But as she looked, a swarm of confused perceptions came to life in her. What could he have said, in any case? Suppose this, suppose that, what could he have said? Suppose the very best, as it must be held by her: that the blame of all could be justly heaped upon Juliane, cherishing a caprice, as it would be termed in a French book, for a man ten years her junior, would she have been able to tolerate it in him that he should so much as hint it? If pressed, he might, being a decent fellow, feel compelled to lie.

And finally, at bottom, was she honestly, undividedly sorry he should have overheard?

She gave him a smart little dub on the shoulder that conveyed the idea of absolution, and commanded, "Get up, John!"

He rose, and stood, looking his biggest and straightest. He beamed.

She got up, too, with a little bounce that dismissed thought, and went to the mirror to settle her loosened locks.

He followed. "You beautiful Nelly!" he greeted her reflection, "if I don't believe you have grown beautifuller than ever, which was impossible!"

She tilted her head like a sparrow drinking, in a shallow pretence of criticizing herself. She caught sight of his towering happiness, and, it must he owned, even in such a moment was chafed, as by a crumpled rose-leaf, by the sense that the chains against which she had revolted were laid on her at last. But one could not have everything! Liberty *and* John-Hector! If one wishes to keep a slave, it is certain one must be something of a slave oneself to the necessity of looking after him.

No, one cannot have everything. There was that Bluebeard's cabinet in his past, too. She pulled up her thought very short, and turned from his eyes in the mirror; she was determined with regard to that never to fall below the level she had set herself; she would not be woman in that; he should not have to suffer for what she had to-day remitted.

She heard now of his studies and experiences, and told him something of hers. She was impressed with the certainty that he was by way of becoming the most brilliant scientist of the age.

He could not know it, because it did not please his lady to explain, but he came very near making himself disliked when he laughed inextinguishable laughter at the idea of his head, for purposes of study, tied up in a wet towel.

Murrie arrived. There was a time of awkwardness, because of a celebrated specialist she had brought, who must be dismissed

without offence, or yet so much as a glimpse of his patient.

"Now you must go," said Nelly to John-Hector, when Murrie had left the room.

"Very well, darling. It is just possible I may not see you again for some time."

"Because——?"

"I sha'n't lie low any longer. I am going about my business without regard to other things. If they particularly want me, they can have me, and be done with it. It won't be long, at worst. Then I can begin anew."

"You are going to remain at—the same address?" she asked, without looking at him.

"You wouldn't want me not to?" came from him, after a time, almost inaudibly.

In the hesitation following, she turned a little paler, as if with fatigue at the conflicts involved in mere living.

"No—you are right, I shouldn't," she said gallantly at last. "But this is good-by, John, for I shall not remain here to be harried with uncertainties. There's Ethel, besides,

who said—who would always believe—No, I am going back to Dresden, to Frau Ottilie."

"Oh, Nelly, not so soon!"

"I will come again, perhaps, if you are good. I am going home directly, you know. I am starving to see them. But I will come again after that. Go quickly—I hear her."

"But you will write me, Nelly?"

"We shall see."

"No, we sha'n't, dearest. My dearest dearest, we sha'n't! Every day! Promise you will write me every day. Every day, Nelly! Now mind! I won't stir until you have solemnly sworn."

"The alternative being such!—There, dear, go at once."

She turned from the door through which he had passed, to face Murrie, who was entering by another.

"She went to the undertaker's to buy him a coffin,
And when she came back, the poor dog was laughing!"

said Murrie, whose eyebrows, taken up to

the verge of her hair, were a sufficiently plain demand for an explanation.

Nelly tranquilly took a chair, and with a serenity of the same family with that before, in another chair, at the opening of this history, leaned back in it to deal with her friend.

"You darling, kind, old mystified thing," she said, gazing at Murrie with half-closed eyelids, between which beamed through a wicked smile, a satisfying affection; you can think *what* you please. I am not going to tell you anything at all."

THE END



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 118 722 8

